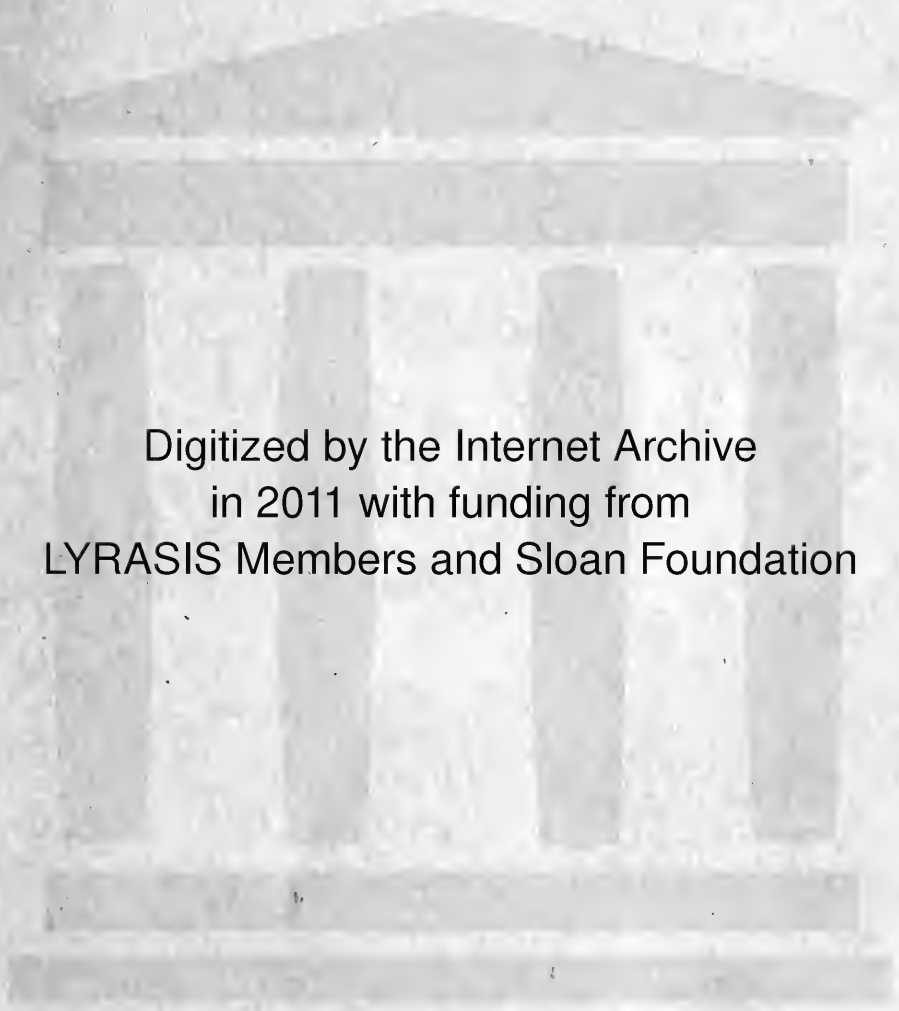


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## INSIDE YOUR HOME







A DESIGN BY DAN COOPER, PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARTIN BRUEHN

# INSIDE YOUR HOME

*By Dan Cooper*

*Illustrated with Photographs*

*Drawings by Teresa Kilham*

N E W   Y O R K   •   1 9 4 6

FARRAR, STRAUS AND COMPANY, INC.

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T O J U L I A D A V I S

*without whose pen this book would have remained conversation*

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*"Beauty is that which when seen is loved—"*

EURIPIDES



# CONTENTS

I. Art Is an Everyday Affair	3
II. What Makes a House a Home?	7
III. Copy, Copy, Copy	19
IV. Color, the Magician and Lighting, the Assistant	30
V. The Manufacturers, God Bless Them	37
VI. What Is a Decorator?	52
VII. The Cottage Home	61
VIII. The Home and the Child	76
IX. The Hotel Situation	89
X. Reason, Emotion, and Discrimination	102
XI. There Is Nothing New Under the Sun	118
List of Artist-Craftsmen	125



## ART IS AN EVERYDAY AFFAIR

THIS IS A BOOK for people who want homes. It is written in the hope of helping the American families that are ready to make an improvement in their living quarters—and, according to one recent sociological survey, there are at least ten million of them. It will try to point out fundamentals rather than formulas and to encourage the homemakers to think for themselves, in order to achieve the comfort and beauty they want.

The average man has a sure instinct for the beautiful. This is a truth which can be relied upon and should never be forgotten. Twenty years of experience in decorating and designing have taught me that most people, if given a choice between a good design and a bad one, will select the better of the two. But the American public has become confused, because it has been given too many recipes for charm.

There have been too many calls to lead the good life by using this period or that period, by combining blue with fuchsia, or red with white, by “pickling” wood or padding headboards. Too many fads have swept the country. Like sheep, we have followed one another from Gothic to Colonial to Mission to Regency. It is time to cut through all this claptrap and free the mind. The common man, in whose century we are said to be living, has plenty of common sense, and he should learn to trust it.

We need to feel the solid ground of basic principles under our

feet. We need to forget all about "trends" and to ask ourselves, primarily, what will make us comfortable and happy. There can be no fixed rules about this, because there are as many different ways of being comfortable and happy as there are individual characters. Fashion is temporary, but home, we hope, is permanent. Therefore, when you plan your home, the first thing to remember is to be yourself.

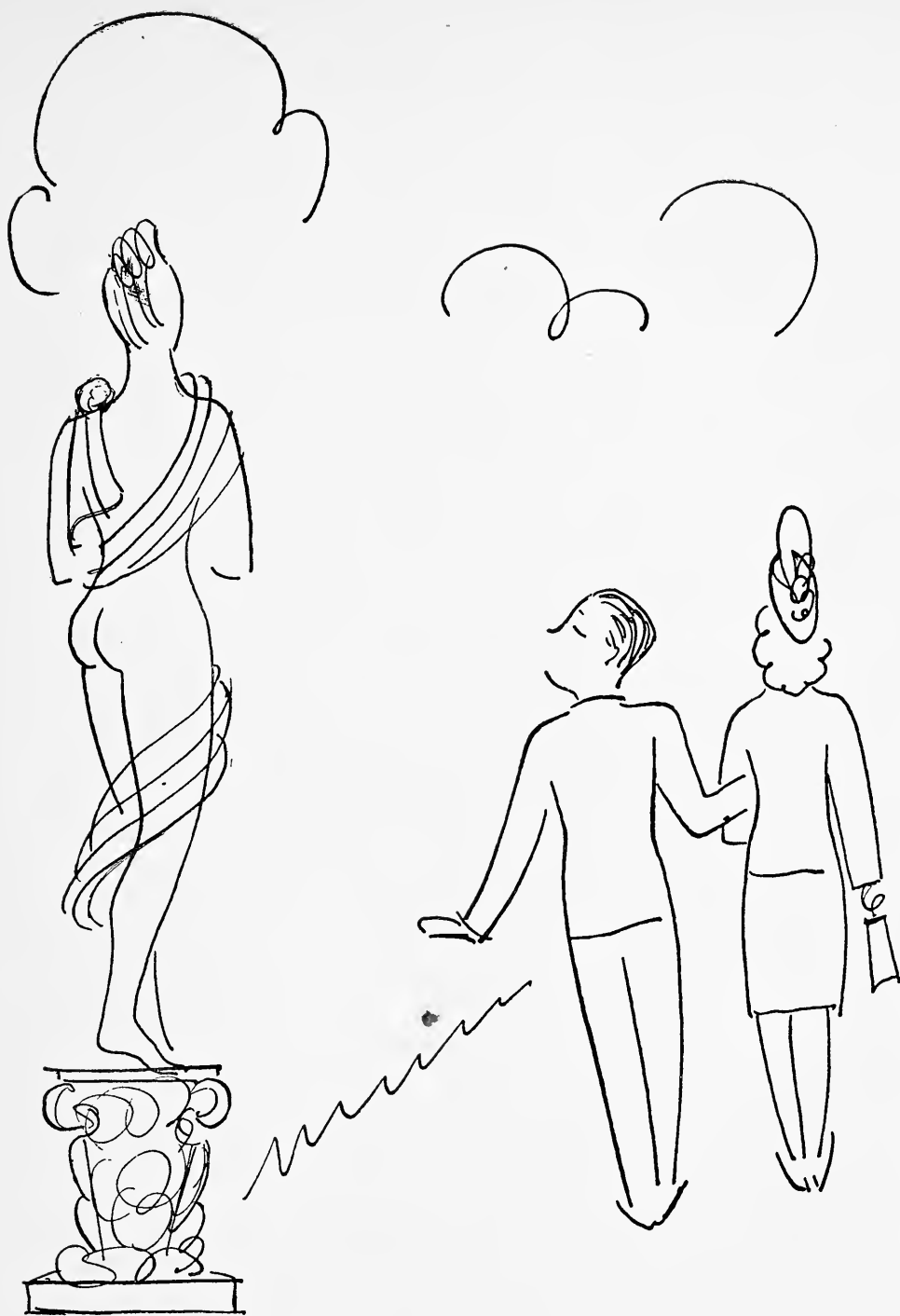
It is not too difficult to make a suitable and pleasing home. The goal is within the reach of Everyman, for it is a question of planning rather than of pocketbook. Beauty is not something high and unobtainable to be gazed at through a glass case and considered too precious for daily use. One great truth is obvious, yet cannot be stated too often because it is so often overlooked:

Art is an everyday affair.

A vague and venerable mist surrounds the term "work of art"; but it should be blown away by a breath of reason, for the word "art" was originally intended to define the works of man as distinct from objects in nature such as trees or stones. Both the artists and the artisans make works of art. Whether the product is a statue or a staircase, a chair or a concerto, the same basic tests apply.

In the first place, man has felt a need for the object of his creation, whatever it may be, or he would not have made it. He wished to elevate his spirit by looking at it or listening to it, he wished to walk on it or sit in it. It does not matter whether the intention was to meet an aesthetic need or a practical one. If the object serves its purpose honestly and efficiently, it cannot help being beautiful, it cannot help being a work of art.

To illustrate this point, a class in decorating at New York University was asked to engage in a contest. The students were to bring in objects which they found in the stores, the only limitation



*The average man has a sure instinct for the beautiful.*

being that nothing was to cost more than ten cents. The prize would be awarded to the thing which most perfectly served its purpose and was most beautiful in design. It might be a package of chewing gum in a well-made wrapper. It might be a streamlined kitchen spoon. It certainly could *not* be a lace paper doily, or anything else that was an imitation of a different sort of product, not a thing in itself.

The members of the class went shopping, and their enthusiasm mounted. They discovered an amazing number of really useful and beautiful objects, hitherto unnoticed, right under their noses. The prizes in this particular contest were won by an electric light bulb, and a fishhook on which a small white feather was tied by a red string, boxed in a cylindrical container with cellophane top and bottom and shiny white paper sides. A runner-up was a tumbler of clear glass with the inside a rounded shape easy to clean. The students were astonished at the variety of products the contest called forth. They got a lot of amusement; but, most important of all, they learned to use their eyes.

There it is, then. Beauty is all around us. It is not to be captured by dollars alone. It is not to be imprisoned in one style of design or another. Learn to look for it. Learn to make it yours. You do not need to learn to love it, for that is its essence. As Euripides has said, "Beauty is that which when seen is loved."



## WHAT MAKES A HOUSE A HOME?

**T**O DEVELOP BEAUTY all over the nation, start first in your own home, the smallest cell of the community, and the one where the individual can most effectively operate.

The present habit of living in identical apartments, the mass production of food, clothing, furniture, building materials, and even houses, tends to negate all individuality. The desire for ownership seems at times to have become a desire for more money, shorter hours, and fewer babies. It would be good if as many people as possible could be induced to become homeowners, with the understanding that ownership means responsibility. When you own a house, you begin to make a home. Yet whether your home be owned or rented, an apartment, a house, or just one room, the same fundamental rules apply.

As you begin to plan that comfortable and attractive abode which you and ten million other people would like to have, plant each foot squarely on the bedrock of a principle. The first rock is: a work of art is a thing which needs doing, and is then well done. The second rock is: before there is a *thing* (anything, everything), there ought to be a *thought*. This applied to the creation of the universe, if we are to believe the Bible story. We can scale it down to our own level, and it will still be true.

So we start to think—and we soon see that a home ought to meet four basic requirements:

- 1) It should suit the family which is going to live in it.
- 2) It should be mentally cheerful.
- 3) It should be physically cheerful.
- 4) It should be clean and fresh, and easy to keep that way.

These four very simple points are the law and the prophets, to be considered before any doctrines about what is or is not fashionable or aesthetic.

1) Let us examine the first point first. To suit the family, the taste of every one who is to live in the home should be considered in the arrangements. This seems elementary, yet it is often overlooked.

Not long ago in one of our large cities, there was a strange epidemic among the school children. In first one home and then another, the offspring piled the furniture on the middle of the kitchen floor and set fire to it. Naturally, this practice was frowned upon. In the subsequent investigation, it was found that, in each case, the child felt ashamed of his home and did not like to bring his friends back to it.

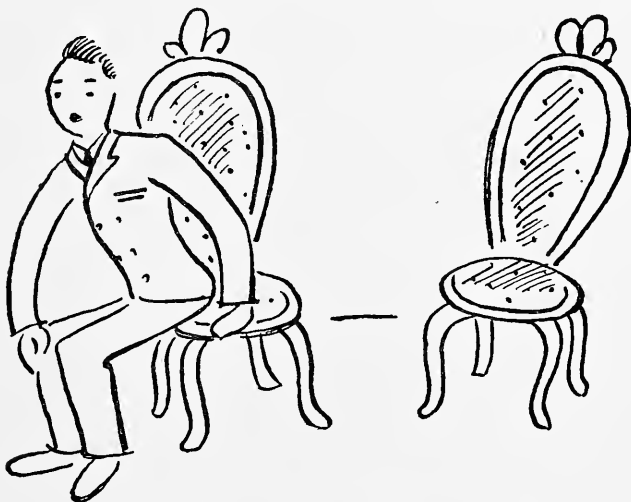
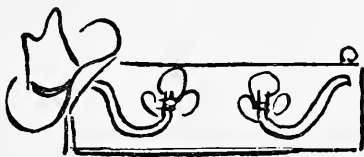
It is not suggested that all furnishing problems should be treated with quite so thorough and direct an approach, but it could be that the children had something close to the root of the matter, as children often do. At least their parable is for the wise to consider. It certainly is evident that the comfort of these moppet incendiaries had not been provided for when their homes were planned.

Remember the children, and ask yourself some searching questions when you begin to think about your home. After you have finished it, will it please you and reflect your way of life? In order to do this, it is essential that everything in the house should have a meaning. Meaningless objects simply should not be included at all. The furniture should be selected in relation to the people who are

going to use it, and not to what the furnishing store happens to have on hand when you shop.

It will not be necessary to buy the Regency console which looks so wonderful in your neighbor's small apartment. Is it she who will live in your house, or is it you? Nor is it essential that you use Grandma's cherished whatnot. Grandma has had her life, now you have yours. If she were alive, she would probably have eliminated it by this time anyway. When she was enjoying it, she had plenty of servants to clean it and she did not go about as much as you do.

Your home should be a genuine expression of the people who live in it, not a rehash of former eras. It should be original in conception and thoughtfully completed. It should give present-day designers a chance. If you have a couple of dear old chairs upon which the



*. . . a couple of dear old chairs . . .*

family has been trained not to sit, and if you have to suppress a scream when a guest lowers his weight into one of them, it is just possible that you are on the wrong tack. In other words, think about yourself first and about your things afterwards. Make your possessions adapt to you, don't be forced to adapt yourselves to them.

2) And now about the mental cheerfulness. It is plain that if the home exceeds the budget, the person who pays for it is not going to be happy in it. You will be handicapped right away with at least one dissatisfied character. It cannot be repeated too often that good taste does not necessarily involve great expense. If your income is limited, you will be happiest in a cottage where your outlay fits within it. There are many simple things which add immeasurably to the cheerfulness of a home. A fireplace is one of the most important, and the initial expense is worth stealing from something else. Plants and flowers are another. Also, little changes can be made with every season and will prove to be like a vacation for every one without serious expense.

3) Physical cheerfulness means comfort above all else. The chairs should be comfortable and placed with reference to light. The night lighting should be good. The people who want to read, or play bridge, or play the piano or radio should have a spot to do so without rearranging everything in the room. Beds should be placed with reference to the kind of ventilation preferred by the people who are going to sleep in them. Several times a day you will have to eat. Do you want a table placed so that you can sling the food directly to it? Or do you want it so far away that you will need roller skates if you are doing your own cooking? Possible solutions to these problems will be discussed in detail later on.

4) Cleanliness, the fourth essential, is closely associated with comfort. Obviously, in this complicated era, the care of the house

must be made as easy as possible. One has only to look through the advertisements in any popular magazine or newspaper to see how the idea of labor-saving has caught the public mind. As a matter of fact, the magazines and the movies have been filling us with visions. According to them, soon every house will have sun in every window, a tree in every backyard, a helicopter hovering over every good neighbor's roof, machines to wash the dishes, make the beds, scrub the floors, do the laundry, perhaps eventually to bathe the baby—not to mention self-dusting furniture made of plastic materials—all for \$1.39 per item, featherweight.

In other words, no one will have a thing to do except attend picnics and movies, and even books will be replaced by films which will project at various speeds the written word on the ceiling over the bed, thus saving the major effort of holding a book in the hand. This is Utopia!—Or is it?

Honesty forces us to admit that the effortless home is not likely to become a reality. The machine can never do *all* the work. Therefore the work that the machine cannot do should be made as simple, as logical, and as expeditious as possible. The care of an interesting and personal dwelling should be a pleasure, especially when it really provides for the needs of its occupants both physically and aesthetically, and every member of the household should welcome specific duties in maintaining even the most streamlined abode.

Only at long last, after these four fundamental requirements have been carefully considered and met, should you be concerned with the appearance of your home. A charming effect will grow naturally out of meeting these requirements. But try to select your furnishings in a way compatible with the life of today. And let them be works of art, remembering always that this term was not intended to apply to the fine arts only, but to anything which is made by human skill.

Let me give an example of someone who applied all these principles in a natural and instinctive way and who, by good sense, produced a beautiful home out of the simplest materials. This is the story of a little girl named Sally, who won a homemaking contest in a public school. The contestants were asked to submit plans for making their own homes over as they would like to have them, and to explain the reasons for their plans. When the judges selected Sally out of several thousand others, they asked her what art courses she had taken.

"I'm not interested in art," she said. "I just thought about what I wanted."

Sally was thirteen. She lived with her father, a carpenter, and her mother, a dressmaker, in a three room flat of which the principal window gave on an air-shaft. They did not have much money to spend. Their great ambition, their dream, was that they might someday escape from their surroundings and live in the country. But naturally they were afraid to give up their small livelihood and move away from the city without security. Such were the unpromising materials with which Sally had to work.

Sally was a practical girl. She planned to have her father in his spare time paint the walls of their living room a bright yellow to make them think of sunshine, and the scarred old floor the warm color of rich red earth. She had him put up a broad shelf at window sill height, which ran under the window and all the way across the left-hand side of the room. On the shelf under the window she put pots of red geraniums, so that her mother might feel she had the garden she was longing for. Sally curtained the window in cheesecloth crossed over and tied back against the wall. Because the cheesecloth was thin, it let in all possible light, and because it was crossed, it partly hid the brick wall opposite.



*. . . books will be replaced by films . . .*

She put the table on the right-hand side of the window, near the kitchen to be handy for food, near the window to get a good light for cutting cloth. Her mother could work on the table during the day, and she herself could do her homework on it in the evening. She planned that her mother could cover the chairs with green slip covers as a reminder of grass and trees. She put her mother's chair near the window and the plants, with the shelf to give ample room for sewing materials. She put her father's chair by the radio in the farthest corner of the room where it would not interfere with conversation, but she gave him the most comfortable chair with a lamp beside it, so that he could rest without getting up, once he had sat down. In a burst of extravagance, she gave him an electric fireplace and a mantel, because every country home should have a fireplace. As a final touch, she braided rag rugs for the floor out of her mother's scraps and she made them small enough for her mother to take up and wash frequently.

Sally was a logical and practical girl. Everything in her dream-home had a meaning, a reason for being as it was. Everything tended toward a general effect, relating the furnishings to each other and to the people who were to use them. By thinking first and then doing what was needed, Sally could not help getting fine results.

If more people would remember these simple and fundamental rules, there would be fewer distraught women holding their heads in their hands and crying, "What shall I *do* with this room?" If they would concentrate on discovering their exact needs, and correlate their purchases so that everything went together, they would find it easier to visualize the final results.

After all, the list of basic needs in any house is brief. You will require:



A place to sit

for talking

for reading

for games or such relaxations as you prefer

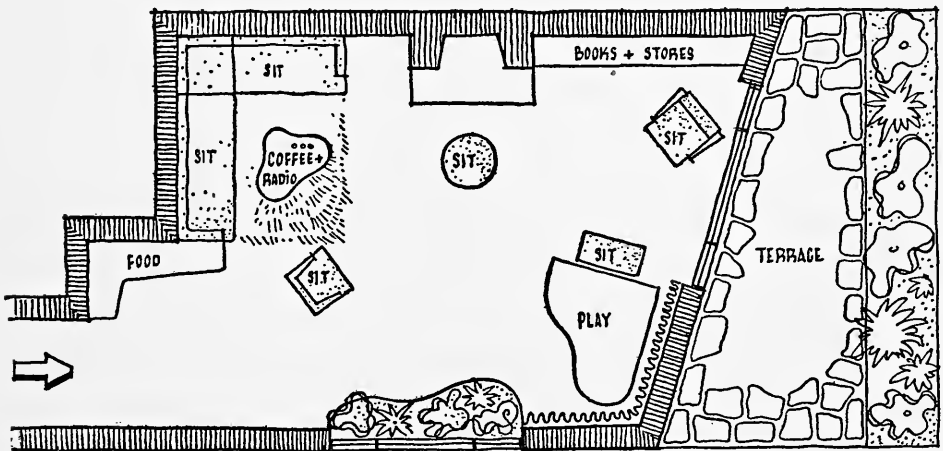
A place to sleep

A place to eat

A number of places to put things in or onto

The nature and arrangement of these furnishings should be determined entirely by the character and tastes of the family they will serve.

With this in mind, look at the two floor plans, A and B. They show the same large room completely altered in character to suit two very different families. The A's are introverts. They are mad about music, about reading, about flowers. They have only a few close friends who come to see them, rain or shine. They think of food as a rather vulgar necessity which interferes at intervals with their artistic pursuits.



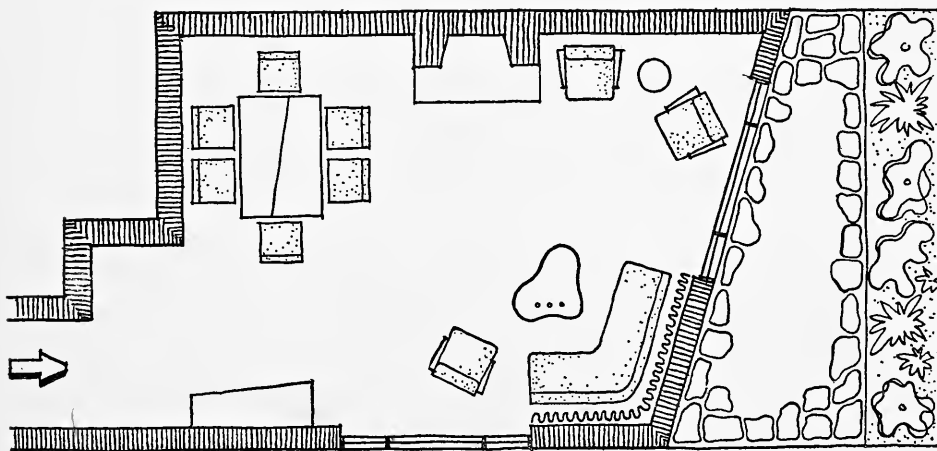
*Floor plan A*

Their piano is their most important object, and you will notice that it has been placed by the largest window, with the keyboard toward the light. Opposite are their bookshelves, with the most comfortable chair in front of them. This chair has an ideal light for reading. It will also serve the musical enthusiast who listens better when he feels alone. The round stool in front of the fire will hold another dreamer. In the far corner is a conversation group composed of two long built-in sofas and an armchair, around a coffee table. Quite a few people can sit here and conceivably murmur occasionally without disturbing the musicians or the rapt listeners. When they eat, the large coffee table serves as a dinner table also. The food can be put out on the built-in buffet at the corner near the kitchen, and anyone who is hungry can serve himself and take his plate where he pleases. In front of the second window, an indoor garden has been built into the floor, and tropical plants can be grown in it all winter as if it were a greenhouse.

Everything in this room is related to the life of the A's. Not the least feature of it is that everything which can be built in has been built in, so that there is an absolute minimum of furniture to move hither and yon or to dust around and under. It is safe to say that Mrs. A, no genius with a dust mop, can keep this room in good order with the least possible effort, which even she will be inclined to make, because the effect is so agreeable she cannot help but love it.

Far different are the B's, extroverts and gourmets. Mr. B is on the way up in his business and feels that he has to do a lot of entertaining. It was a real grief to him that he could not afford a separate dining room, until that slick chick Mrs. B showed him how nicely they could manage without it. No buffet suppers for them. When they have a dinner party, they have a maid in to serve the excellent

dishes which Mrs. B has spent the day preparing. Six or eight guests are their limit, so they have a three-way table. Two sections of it hold six comfortably, and the third along the opposite wall acts as a serving table. Put the three sections together, and you have a handsome table for eight. After six have eaten they will have to talk, and the chairs in the opposite corner are cleverly grouped for conversation. No one ever has to be alone at the B's. On the other hand, if two want to have a confidential discussion, they can manage to get off by themselves. Then when the maid has cleared off the table, the party can move back to it for poker or some other group game. Mrs. B has no plants, as she secretly considers them rather messy, but she keeps lovely arrangements of cut flowers on the tables. And she does not care how many times she has to run the vacuum cleaner around the table to keep it immaculate because, as she will be the first to tell you, her home and her friends mean more to her than anything else in the world.



*Floor plan B*

Both the A's and the B's are completely satisfied with their arrangements. They both considered carefully what they wanted, and they both got it. It is not too difficult to succeed in making your home what you would like to have it. It is not too esoteric. Planning is really very simple and it is well worth-while. For, after all, our purpose in working, the goal of all our efforts, is to provide the three essentials—food, clothing, and shelter. And what is “shelter” except a home for our families and ourselves?

## COPY, COPY, COPY

**T**HINK FIRST about your own needs when you begin to furnish or refurnish your home. Get them clearly in mind and plan how you would like to meet them. Never forget that, whether it is one room or twenty, whether it is old or new, it is *your* home, and you and your family are the ones to be suited. With this well established, you are ready for the second step.

Look over your present belongings with a critical eye, and discard, discard, discard. Discard everything that you can bring yourself to part with. Everything, unless as basically useful as a bed or kitchen table, or so beautiful that it gives you a glow of pleasure whenever you see it, or so full of sentimental value that it epitomizes something you never want to forget. And this brings us up against the question of heirlooms.

In a sense, the heirloom has become for an American what a coat of arms is for a European—a proof of family standing. No one could quarrel with this innocent manifestation of human vanity. If you are so fortunate as to have some family pieces, by all means keep them, but keep only the best of them, the ones which were good in their day, or which you have seen so often used by some beloved person that they have taken on a personal identity. In other words, if Grandpa had bad taste in 1840, don't think that you have to be saddled with it for the rest of your life. On the other hand, if he had a favorite chair where you can still almost see him sitting, have the

courage to hang on to it, even if it is relegated to an obscure corner. But do not keep everything. Keep only the best. And have no hesitation about mixing good old furniture with new, about combining periods. The most interesting homes in the world have been built up through the centuries with fine things which different generations brought to them. Fine pieces of furniture, like people of good breeding, can always live together.

The worship of the antique in this country dates from the time just after World War I when Europe first opened up to the average American, and this nation became suddenly conscious of the beautiful things created in the past. As soon as travel was possible, our decorators joined the annual rush and came back every year loaded down with ye oldie mouldies for Châteaux Américains. Nothing deterred them—not even the thought of those ice-embalmed, but not always lonely, hotel bedrooms which yawned for them in the Old World. It was rare indeed that a designer had the courage to break away from the routine and travel across his own country to see for himself what *Americans* were using and what *Americans* needed.

Some of these transatlantic pilgrimages were undoubtedly good. The eye should be trained by looking at the treasures of the past. The past should not be thrown away—but it should be learned from, not merely imitated. It would have been better, in those days, had we merely looked and come away, with eyes trained by what we had seen and ideas which we would try to adapt to our own way of living. The Europeans sold to us gladly; but the most intelligent among them went to work trying to design something new for modern times. We should have done the same thing.

The laments from across the sea for the cultural treasures Uncle Sam tore away from ravaged Europe were equaled only by the alacrity with which the lamenters scurried to find new treasures

that they could sell. We absorbed them all, and considerable confusion resulted.

Our ancestors were individualists, or they would not have come to this country, but we are peculiarly sheeplike as a people in our acceptance of fashion as dictated by those who insist that they know. Blue is the color for living rooms this year, and pink for bedrooms, with swags and garlands. Next year it all has to be thrown away for something else. What has this to do with making a home? A home should be more enduring than a fad. Unfortunately, our style mentors have insisted on a most pretentious and self-conscious type of interior—aristocracy by formula.

Consequently, the pages of our periodicals are filled with photographs of neatly and carefully composed rooms, and under them such captions as: "Williamsburg blue" walls; "Aubusson" carpet: Purple "Limoges" vases adorn the "Adam" mantel, and an 18th Century (type) mahogany table is surrounded by chairs of the same wood with "Prince of Wales" feathers carved on the backs. But why? For what kind of people is this room intended? What does this hodgepodge of collectors' items have to do with American life?

The degree to which the public mind has become baffled by all of this babble is shown by the story of a woman who went to a large furnishing store on Fifth Avenue and asked to see a decorator. He appeared and began to probe her aspirations, decoratively speaking. Vagueness was the result. She wanted something choice and rich, but did not know what it should be. Some lovely old things, of course. She would like a few collectors' pieces by the best European designers, like Chippendale and Duncan Phyfe. . . .

The decorator decided to start again on the basis of what colors she preferred. She answered brightly, "I haven't made up my mind,

but I have definitely decided that I do not want Hepplewhite, or off-white, or any of those lighter shades.”

Now this is a very funny story when you consider that Duncan Phyfe is one of the few remembered American designers, and that Hepplewhite was an English craftsman who made very beautiful furniture during the late 18th Century. But it is also a tragic story when you think of the confusion in this woman's mind. It is tragic because it makes no sense.

It makes no sense that those with enough intelligence to seek help in doing something they know little about should have to cut their way through volleys of chitchat about what is what and who is who in the business of furnishing. If you really want to learn about the famous old designers, don't try to skim it out of the magazines. Go and see examples of their work in the nearest museum, and let the feeling of it sink into your mind. Study the social history of their times and sense how well their products represent it. This will give you something upon which you yourself can build. But if you have no real interest in the subject, who cares?

No one would deny that the styles of the 18th Century are beautiful. They were made for an era of spacious living, when all wealth was concentrated at the top of society, when labor was cheap, when a workman could spend months at a low wage doing one piece of elaborate carving. They were made when mahogany was a new wood brought back in sailing ships as ballast from the newly opened West Indies.

They were designed for the life of their own time and they were beautiful. One cannot say good-by to Sheraton or any other of the master craftsmen of the past. But their furniture was made for a life when the home was the center of entertainment, when transportation was so difficult that visitors expected to be entertained for



a long period of time, formally as well as informally, and when phalanxes of servants made entertainment easy. The rich lived in great houses and could hire enough people to do whatever they wanted done, no matter how elaborate and mannered it might be. The poor lived in damp little huts, rarely containing more than one or two rooms, and no one ever thought of asking them about their ideas of decoration.

Our modern tempo is exactly the contrary. It is now possible by magical transportation to be almost everywhere at once, and we try to be. It is also possible to see almost everyone, and some of us attempt that also. Under these conditions, often the best thing that home can offer is a chance to be alone and to rest. Simplicity and large bare spaces, plain lines, lack of fussiness—these are the things which create a restful atmosphere. This is a true description of the style now known as “modern.”

This style should have a great meaning for everyone. Its essentials are as available to the limited pocketbook as to the full one. The average man, through high wages and mass production, has at present a greater hope of achieving a satisfactory home than ever before in the history of the world. And his chances of getting the sort of thing he wants will be doubled if he will remember that “modern” should mean restful simplicity.

Tortured chromium tubing and queer-shaped chairs, birdcages made into lamps, and dressing tables fashioned from hatracks may be whimsical novelties, but they are not essentially modern. They might make you laugh in a bar, but they are wacky, and you know it. You do not have to put your bed so low that you assume the posture of a praying mantis every time you make it. You do not have to build your chairs so low that it requires a derrick to raise you out of them. You do not need to have anything in your home that you really dis-

like, in order to be stylish. Build a home which will outlast a whim.

In selecting your belongings, get back to the fundamental principle: *A work of art is a thing which fulfills its purpose.* Things do not need to be expensive in order to fit that requirement. Pick what you buy strictly with reference to what its use will be, and forget about style. But do not forget that your eyes must be pleased as well as the rest of your body. Strangely enough, one successful and functional article will gradually dominate a room. The best is always an enemy of the merely good.

Not long ago, a wealthy woman took a trip and left her living room in the hands of a great furnishing store to be "done," regardless of expense. When she came home, she found she had been done—but right. And it was handsome! The walls had not only been painted, they had been painted and then rubbed over with a second color in streaks and patches for "antique" effect. The furniture ranged from ormolu to hoodoo, and no value under a hundred dollars. There was not an inch of wood left plain if carving could be crammed on it. There was satin everywhere, and figured satin at that. The windows were curtained not once but twice, and the overdrapes had linings and triple ruffles in three colors. Although the furniture was supposed to be "Italian," it was all reproduction, and not even true copies at that. The room was certainly rich-looking, but as the owner tried to live in it she became increasingly aware of a certain uneasiness.

Finally she sent for a specialist, with the old cry, "What shall I *do* with this room?" She was asked whether, in all the complexity of arrangement, there was anything still needed to make it perfectly comfortable. After some thought, she admitted that she did need a cabinet to hold her phonograph records.

The decorator sent her a very fine old Italian cabinet, an honest



... the posture of a praying mantis ...

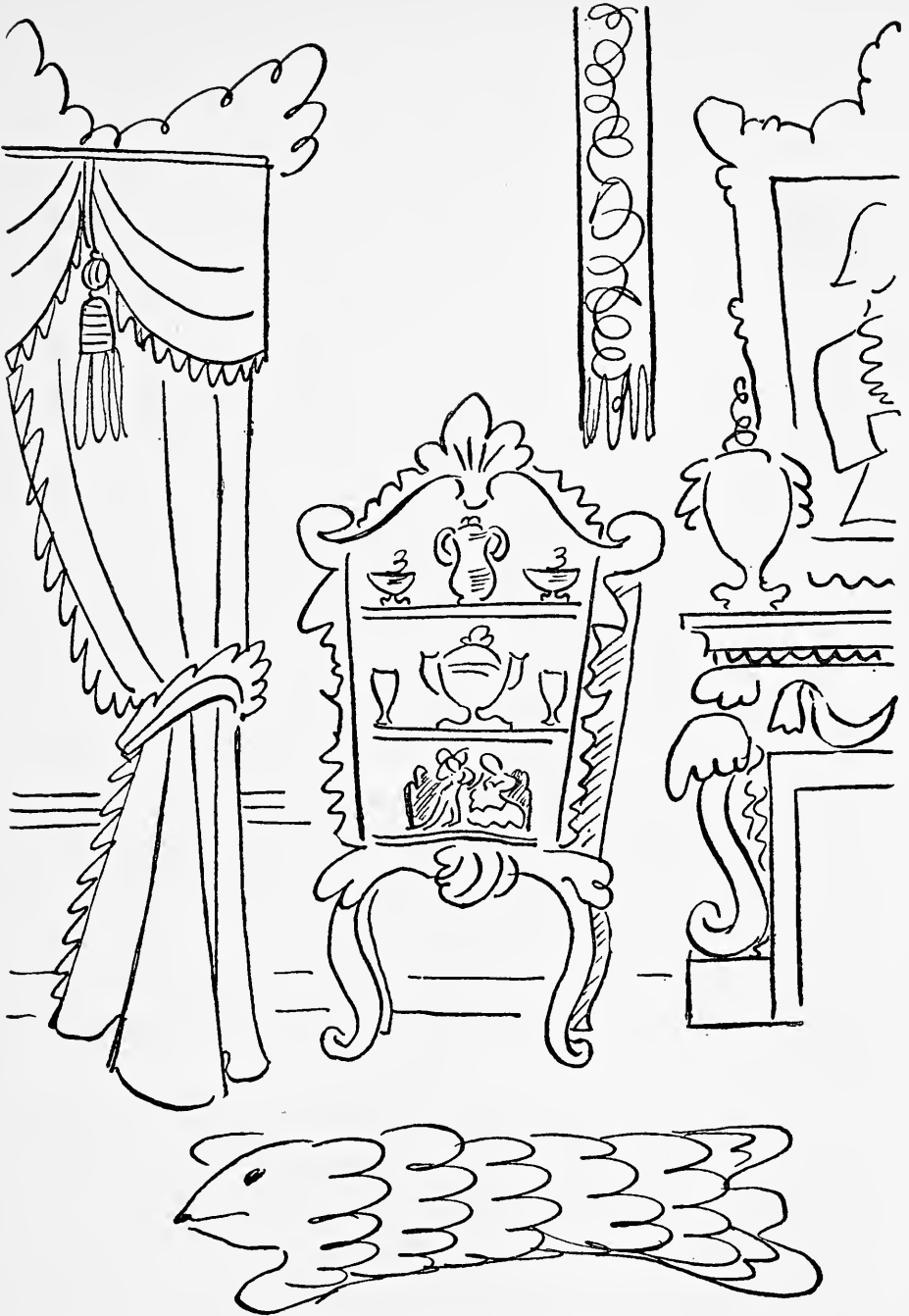
shape absolutely unornamented, of beautiful wood. She thought that it was too plain, but accepted it, placed it, and the decorator sat back to see if the charm would work.

After a week or so she reported in amazement that, curiously enough, it was the one thing on which her friends remarked when they came to see her new apartment. Another week, and she decided that the collection of fans in a gilt-edged vitrine really did not look well above it, and she thought it best to put them away. Time went by, knowledge came, wisdom lingered, and little by little the simplicity and integrity of that cabinet pushed the over-ornamentation out of the room.

The draperies came down, and the windows let in light and air again, with Venetian blinds and straight simple hangings to draw across them at night. Six occasional chairs in pearwood, satinwood, and gilding were replaced by two comfortable chairs on which it was possible to sit more than occasionally. A slip cover in a plain light material covered the satin sofa. The crystal candelabra remained, glowing and sparkling softly against a plain but warmly colored wall. In the end she had a beautiful, simple, and restful room, and was astonished to find herself spending time at home rather than hunting excuses to take her out.

Even across three centuries, the influence of this honest old Italian workman could still be felt; for good workmanship has a life and spirit of its own.

The old Italian cabinetmaker helped, but the starting point in this rearrangement was a little simple thinking about her own needs. And there we are again. When we go about the creation of a room or a house for today, it is essential to consider our individual way of life. What do we need, how do we use our days and nights, how can we equip a place to help rather than hinder us?



... "done," regardless of expense.

If you like music, remember that a piano requires a large space, for scale, for tonal quality, for audience. If you are a bridge fiend, you will be happiest if you can set a room aside for it; non-players will be in agony if they have to stay in the room with your game. If you do intellectual work at home, you will need a small cozy room full of cabinets for books, a large writing table, a stand for temporary reference material, a file, a comfortable desk chair, a sofa to lie down on in the hope that blood rushing to the head will bring an idea with it. And possibly—just possibly—a small stool so uncomfortable that not even your best friend could perch on it for more than a fleeting moment.

If you and your family are sun worshipers, you will want large windows. If you have a beautiful view, you will want to bring it into the room with a picture window. But if, like most of us, you look out at nothing special, why lead your life in a goldfish bowl behind sheets of plate glass? There is no more sense in slavishly following a modern trend than there is in tying yourself to some ancient period.

Side walls of glass are wonderful for specific purposes, but they are not adapted to every house or every situation. Except in isolated areas, they are the death of privacy. In a modernized resort at Lake Placid, a honeymoon couple was assigned to a cottage with a glass wall giving on the common promenade. Sympathetic people among the other guests were saddened to see them sitting day after day on the sofa in their living room, like figures in an old daguerreotype, waiting for the sun to go down.

You don't have to suffer like that in order to be modern any more than you have to perch on wobbly antique chairs in order to look rich. This is the message: Do not copy. Do not imitate anybody. Be yourself.

It's *your* home, isn't it? Do with it as you like.



*Sun worshipers . . . will want large windows.*

## COLOR, THE MAGICIAN, AND LIGHTING, THE ASSISTANT

**B**Y THIS TIME your home, new or old, is bare as a bone, pared down to the essentials, which you have selected from among your former belongings with great discrimination, or which you have newly acquired with equally great discrimination. Now it is time to start building it up again, to start composing it into a harmonious whole. What to do? Begin with your colors, for color is the basic element in composing a room. Color is the first thing the eye sees on entering; color can improve or ruin whatever it touches; color can be heaven or hell. Color is actually as structural as steel.

It is a magician. It can enlarge or decrease, it can soothe, it can excite, or it can sit in a corner and mind its own business. There is no bad color, it is only bad when poorly related to that which adjoins it. It is not difficult to improve one's color sense. In large cities, the museums are filled with those objects of art which have come down to us through the ages, their individual merit passed upon by those who have preceded us and adjudged them worthy of attention. Study such things, tune the eye to good color. After a while, a sour color combination will begin to offend you, and a slight shock will pass through you when you see it.

For those who have not access to museums, nature itself is an infallible guide. But you must take real, not man-made, nature for your teacher. Do not turn to the orange marigolds and magenta



petunias which burgeon in amateur gardens, or the yellow and red cannas which enliven race tracks. Think of the brown earth in a freshly plowed field with the green of spring grass around it, think of the blue sea lapping the dun-colored sand, think of the muted gray and black of a winter landscape. Can there be anything more beautiful than the blending of earth, sea, sky, and clouds as seen from an airplane, when the whole world appears in perfect harmony?

The choice of color can and should be representative of one's personal taste, but it should be used with knowledge and restraint. It will not do to go overboard for blue just because you like it, or to let your emotions carry you off on billowing clouds of pink. A household of nervous temperaments should not be overfurnished with color. The fewer colors used, the calmer the effect, and the happier the people will be. The introvert might be brought out of his shell by more brilliant color; on the other hand, if he is too firmly entrenched, brightness might make a confirmed hermit of him. As a rule, the extrovert, the entertainer, the greeter, needs a lot of color to make his home seem as active as he usually is.

Geography has much to do with the use of color. The lush and glaring quality of hot climates would best be relieved by large masses or backgrounds of cool simple color, such as white, gray, pale lemon yellow. Against these masses, a wonderful effect can be obtained by the contrast of a few small objects in brilliant crimson, emerald green, deep bright blue, orange, bright yellow. These can be moved about for variety, or taken away altogether, according to taste.

In colder northern climates, the reverse is true. The background color should be warmer, although again this is subject to individual temperament, and the touches of contrast should be larger. In the tropics, a sofa pillow might be crimson, whereas in the north the

whole chair could well be. On a cold and snowy night, such a chair would warm you mentally and physically. On the other hand, in the Mohave desert, the mere thought of a crimson pillow would make one expire with the heat. And so it goes, inside and outside the house. If you have a favorite chair in your living room, try protective coloring, a very neutral cover, in order to preserve it for yourself. Guests will instinctively select something brighter. This really works.

In large cities, where the light has to fight its way down through the close precipices of the buildings and arrives muted with dust and smoke, quiet tones seem more suitable. These are also easier to keep clean in the city dirt. But avoid the drab. In the country, on the other hand, the home may be allowed to sparkle with color like a summer morning.

The uses and advantages of color should be considered even in the smallest accessories of the home life. Dinner plates in a cheerful shade will help the mood of a dinner party at once, food will taste better out of gay pottery dishes, salad will seem crisper on a cool white or yellow plate. Decide whether you want the mood around your table to be one of cheerful gusto, quiet elegance, or peaceful relaxation, and select your china accordingly. There it is again, the *thought* behind the *thing*.

There is no rule to follow in the selection of color, except to use a leaven of common sense and to train the eye as much as possible by looking at beautiful things. Long ago, the New Englanders painted their villages white and their barns red, perhaps for lack of other pigments, and because these were easy and inexpensive colors to make. There was little room for errors of taste, and the charm of these villages is beyond question. Today, the vast range of colors available should render us more wary, and we must make

an effort to develop our color sense so that we can choose well among such riches. But there is nothing mysterious in the use of color that an ordinary man cannot learn if he will use his eyes on the beauty all about him.

Second in basic importance to the use of color in a room is the use of lighting. In light there is also a magic. Combined with color, it can alter dimensions, expand or contract space, lend mystery, make for gaiety or coziness, change a mood completely. For example, if your room is disproportionately long, you can foreshorten it by painting one end wall in contrasting color and throwing a light on the wall. This will bring it toward you in an amazing way. If the ceilings are too high, let a light hang some distance below them and shade it so that they are left in shadow, and they will lose their vaultlike quality. If you have one of the narrow little halls like rabbit runs which afflict modern apartments, a change of color or a bright picture on the end wall, lit by a spotlight near the cornice, will give it interest and make it less of a hole in the wall.

It must also be admitted that wrong lighting will produce the most extreme discomfort. Everyone has sometimes suffered under the onslaught of an overhead glare. One diabolical invention to be found all over America is a cluster of bright little unshaded bulbs on prongs pendent from the ceiling and boring into the brain through the afflicted eyes. The Gestapo recognized the efficacy of this device when they used prolonged glaring light to break down their prisoners. And while we are on the subject, let us take a swing at the all-too-prevalent wall bracket. These objects are usually spotted around the wall in a symmetrical manner bearing no relation whatever to the furnishing of the room. They are neatly contrived so that they are too high to shed a good light on what you might be reading, but when you stand up they will hit you at eye level with

an unremitting stare. The shades on them are usually crooked, and the light will pour down at you from under at least one; or, if they are half-shades and a careful housewife keeps them straight, the glare from behind them will blind you. As a last touch of designing genius, there are usually so many of them that if they are all lighted the room looks as bright as a well-illuminated operating theater; but if some are turned out and others are left, the effect is lopsided. At best, the wall bracket makes a lot of light which then we must cut down with many fussy little shades. Why? Why? Why?

When you plan the lighting of your room, think first of comfort and of the use you want to make of your lights. As much to be avoided as the old-fashioned chandelier is some of the modern indirect lighting which from the cornice pours down a flood of white light and makes every one in the room look ten years older—an attention few women need. If it is a living room, think first of table lamps near comfortable chairs. Let them be high enough to shed a good light on a book and low enough so that the naked bulb won't leer at you when you sit down beside it. Let them be solid, and of a decent size, and with shades dark enough so that the light falls where you want it and nowhere else. And let them stand on tables at least large enough to hold a book, an ash tray, and perhaps some flowers. If, with these lights provided, the room still is not bright enough for general conversation, try lighting the pictures on the wall. The type of lamp which is attached to the frame and sheds light only on the picture is not very expensive and is easily available. Or, if you have no picture important enough to light, don't be afraid to try one of the modern lamps like spotlights that can be twisted around to throw the beam wherever you want it.

If you have a bridge table permanently standing in a suitable corner—and if you play much bridge it is to be hoped that you

have—a bullet light sunk flush with the ceiling will throw the light on the table and nowhere else, will never have to be moved, and can never be knocked over by the puppy or by the sudden, convulsive movements of one of the players as he writhes in the throes of disaster. If you are lucky enough to have a partner in your bedroom, by all means attach to each bed one of the covered lights which will illuminate your detective story and not your comrade's eyes. If you are lighting a staircase, be sure that the glow falls on the top step and on the bottom, because those are the ones that people have a tendency to fall over. And so on throughout your home. Think what you are doing, and use your common sense.

There is another type of lighting to be considered in planning your home, and that is daylight. This, by God's grace, will come through your windows freely at any time when you do not smother them in layers of curtains, roller shades, valances, and doodads. Can there be any valid reason for cutting a big hole in the wall to admit light and air, and then covering it with layers of material so that no light and air can get in? Is it sensible to spend money and time on little curtains of thin material which will be fresh and crisp until they blow out of the window the first time you open it, and then will never be fresh and crisp again? By all means, in planning your curtains, have them arranged to lie back against the wall in the daytime and, if possible, to draw at night for privacy and coziness. By all means, replace the glass curtains with Venetian blinds by which light volume can be adjusted, or with those shades made of thin strips of bamboo which come from China and will soon be on the market again. As for the roller shades, it will be best to forget them. With their nasty little tendency to fly up and twirl their cords around the roller (requiring a stepladder to remove), or to get stuck askew at a lower level, or to drop with a resounding

thwack on the head of an unwary adjuster, it seems obvious that they were made, like flies, for the purpose of trying our patience.

Remember, color and light will be the homemaker's best friends if, as in the case of all friends, they are handled with real understanding.

## THE MANUFACTURERS, GOD BLESS THEM

**T**HERE YOU ARE in a house, with basic colors chosen to suit both your own personality and the locality where it is situated, and with lighting planned for drama and comfort rather than mere glare. It is to be hoped that you have taken a few looks at nature as you blended your colors, for, as Bill Nye said so truly: "If we were to lose nature, what a loss that would be."

And now, how to furnish your home? In other words, where will you sit, lie, eat, and store your things?

Perhaps you have a few good pieces left from your former existence. In this lucky case, do not be afraid of building a room around them. Remember the story of the Italian cabinet and the long-range influence of good workmanship. But in selecting the new, try to harmonize with rather than to match the old. Very different personalities can be strong friends, provided they have the same basic integrity. Don't be afraid to mix your periods in furniture or to keep reminders of old experience. The most distinguished homes are those which are the records of lives. On the other hand, perhaps you are starting from scratch, with nothing to prevent your moving in whatever direction you please. One thing is sure. Whether you are furnishing completely or merely filling in, you are up against the manufacturers and the furnishing stores—and that, my friends, is something of a bottleneck.

The manufacturers of housefurnishings for the American people

have today an opportunity such as has never before come their way; but an inquiring mind cannot yet discover that they are awake to it. Their stocks of outmoded models are gone. They have learned how to make wartime products out of materials and by methods new to them. Their future customers are being forced by present circumstances to depend upon their own efforts to keep themselves and their houses in order. And yet, the manufacturers are reconverting their factories, but they have not come around to reconverting their minds. There are, of course, exceptions, but in the main this is true.

Three of the best known men in the inexpensive furniture field, who are about to start the manufacture of postwar articles on a large scale, report that they are planning a "contemporary line of 18th Century." This phrase seems to have been begotten by Gobbledegook out of Confusion, as was the "semi-permanent" construction of some war building projects.

Sheraton would turn over in his grave if he could see what is called "Sheraton" today. He was a manufacturer, but he was also a creator. He did not copy Gothic furniture, he did not reproduce the immovable Jacobean tables suited to immemorial halls, or the red velvet and high carved backs which made every chair a throne in the days when chairs were a luxury only for the lordly. Sheraton stepped straight into the life of his own day. His furniture reflected the new intercourse between France and England by importing a touch of French elegance and lightness for people who were beginning to prefer a soufflé to a suet pudding. He used the new woods of his era, mahogany and satinwood, and he discovered new things to do with them. Just as Chippendale before him reflected the opening up of China, just as the Regency style which followed him reflected the renewed interest in Greece, so Sheraton built his designs



into the life of his own time. Why do we not do the same thing today?

It is not only the 18th Century that has been singled out for imitation by the furniture manufacturer. Under a headline in a trade publication which reads, "Right off the Line from the Midwest Shows," we find a round-backed number described as "A Victorian Clubman's Chair." The only fallacy in this type of reasoning is the failure to allow for the scarcity of Victorian Clubmen today. How many do you know?

All of these former styles were made in the time when men were happy to work for a shilling a day, or were rich when they had a dollar. They could spend a week on a detail of carving and, because they made an article from beginning to end by hand, they were able to feel creative in their work, they were able to put some love into it. By just this much they were happier men than the machine operators of today, and, for the same reason, the things which they made were works of art. But an imitation, simplified for reasons of economy and stamped out by machine, with just the most vital details missing, is not a work of art. It has no spirit.

Today the machine operator carves twelve chair backs at a time, following a form which is clamped in front of him. His little tracing instrument must slavishly follow the set pattern, while, down below, the knives are cutting wood which he cannot see. The pleasure he feels in his work is due to the thought of the check he will get at quitting time. He creates nothing. His product is unloved, and looks it.

The machine is a compelling, a sadistic monster, emitting an ear-splitting roar. Furniture made by it must permit of straight clean cuts, rapid and vicious. Intricacies are impossible in inexpensive modern furniture. There remains, however, the possibility of balance

and proportion, of fine and restful design. There remains also a most vital factor—the wood itself. The wood has grown, particle by particle, through years and perhaps through centuries. It has once been a beautiful tree, and even in its final stage it cannot be ugly if it is left alone.

If the wood is left alone, if it is merely sprayed and rubbed with a preservative material which does not alter the color nor hide the grain, it will defy man's efforts at standardization. It will vary tree by tree and board by board: no two pieces of furniture will be identical, for, as the duplicates catapult from the machine's yawning mouth, the wood itself will alter the appearance of each one. Since this is so, why should the manufacturers cover their products with a dark standard stain, and so produce endless monotony? The lively and glowing quality of mahogany left unstained is a pleasure almost unknown to us. What we get is a dark, dead thing called mahogany, a product of the stain pot.

The manufacturers give one reason for their fixation on the past. They are making, they say, the stuff that will sell. But actually they are only making what they *think* will sell. And that brings us back to the capacity of the average man for recognizing a beautiful object and a good design whenever he has a chance.

This inherent capacity in the public can be exercised in many directions. One of the largest paint manufacturers in the country recently put it to the test. He prepared to make up his new line by the time-worn device of finding out what color sold best the year before, shading it slightly, and pushing it out again. In this instance it was terra cotta. So he made three shades of terra cotta, from light to dark, and conceived the idea of selling the customers on banding their walls horizontally in this somewhat uneasy hue. But, as luck would have it, before the campaign was launched and the nation

was striped from baseboard to molding, he was persuaded to try an experiment.

A panel of four colors was prepared, not on the basis of what had sold in the past, but on the basis of what would be beautiful, restful, and practical for people to have in their homes. The four colors were all of the same value in depth so that the huge mixture vats could be changed from one to another without excessive cleaning, and also so that the eye could pass from one to another without a shock. There was moss-green, medium gray, soft yellow and rosy beige. The green and gray were intended for warm sunny rooms with southern exposure, the yellow and beige for sunless rooms which faced north. They were all so harmonious that they could be used together in the same room or in rooms opening into each other, thus providing a ready-prepared color scheme for any house.

The manufacturer decided to try this out on a guinea pig, so he sent for his chief outlet man, a smart, successful, diamond-studded cookie. Without explanation, the outlet man was asked which colors he thought the public would prefer and, without hesitation, he went for the panel of soft shades. In fact, he burst into instantaneous enthusiasm when he saw them, and his practical mind at once placed the pinkish beige in the bedroom, the green and gray in the living and dining rooms, and the yellow in the basement for the kids' play room. Since this critic was John Q. Public himself, the manufacturer went ahead, and the colors turned out to be commercially successful. There again—define the problem, solve, and proceed; and the public will accept because the need exists.

There is another reason for the stereotyped conglomeration of household articles spewed out by the factories. All too few of the manufacturers are willing to pay designers to do original work. It is cheaper to buy a piece of old furniture, trim off the details which

give it character, and then copy it ad nauseam. It is easier for the salesmen to take orders for twelve dozen Chippendale suites and three Sheraton sideboards than to push something new. The public has been sold a bill of goods, and he knows they will buy. But did you ever ask yourself why you need a sideboard, now that silver and linen drawers are built into kitchen equipment? Would you rather run back and forth to the dining room six times whenever you do the dishes?

As a result of this timid clinging to tradition, we have china with a rose complex, copying designs of sixty years ago, lamps of senseless vegetation or incongruous figures, fabrics so lacking in thought that it is impossible to discover what the approach was in designing them, ancient furniture patterns as ill-adapted to modern life as a hoop skirt to a subway rush hour. Thousands will be spent for a machine to copy a candlewick spread, and little or nothing for original thinking.

And yet the country is full of design talent eager to help. We might have a world in which there was nothing ugly to buy, nothing out of proportion or badly colored, all tastes and needs provided for in a ready market, and nothing, from a pot holder to a Coney Island, repulsive to the sight. But usually, when the designers approach the manufacturers, they are asked to compromise on their designs and they withdraw instead of fighting for what they believe good.

Other countries are not so hard on their talent. In Sweden, people come into the stores and ask for glass or pottery by their favorite designer. Only in the world's greatest industrial country does the industrial designer remain too often anonymous. And not only the designer. Can you name the architect of Radio City before someone counts ten?

These criticisms are not intended to strike the handful of forward-looking manufacturers who have tried to give our designers a chance. Whenever first-rate talent has been used, it has been found to pay enormous dividends. A china factory has made a great success of a line of undecorated ware which has an intrinsic beauty of proportion adapted to modern interiors. A well-known glass factory has a staff of artists whose designs are studied and improved for a year before they are used, and this glass is justly famous and successful.

But not enough factories have followed the lead of their best competitors. The use of good design has not been extended down into the moderate price field. Yet it is there, above all other places, that it is most needed. People with low incomes need more than anyone else to buy well-designed and well-made furnishings, because the chance is that, once they have made the initial expenditure, they will have to live with the article for the rest of their lives.

It is not the public which is hanging back. A recent survey made by a national magazine found the larger percentage of their readers in favor of the new way of furnishing a house. But so far the public has an inadequate supply of good articles from which to make their selections. The public mind is running in circles, and for that we have partly to thank the furnishing store attack.

Too many honest men in this country, trying to make an honest living by selling goods, swing from whimsy to flimsy in a monkey-like effort to catch the public taste. They will imitate not anything, but everything.

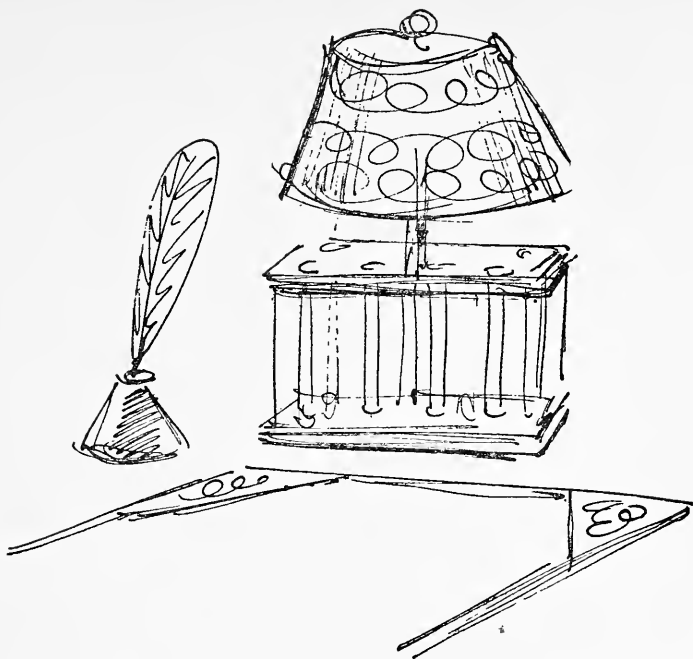
A big store in one of our larger cities, searching for something new, took a deep breath, plunged, and installed a MODERN HOUSE in their display room. The house embodied the essentials of modern design—uncluttered spaces, beautiful woods, all sorts of things combined, with no common denominator except good taste.

There were hand-made objects from China, and products of the local school children, textiles from everywhere, a few handsome antiques, hand-blown glass from a little factory in West Virginia. The furniture was made in small shops from designs created for life today. The result attained the objective of restfulness and simplicity.

The public loved it. They could not get enough of it. The exhibit ran for six months, and everything in it was sold at the end of the first two days for delivery on closing, this in spite of the fact that many things were expensive because they had had to be custom built (page the manufacturer again)! It was explained that the display represented a hope for the future rather than something which was currently available.

The store was pleased, naturally enough. What to do next? A change, of course. So they took their ever-loving customers right back to what they denominated A SUNBONNET CLOSE. This went back to the spinning wheel and brass kettle school, back to ye old candle dippe doubling as a desk lamp, the cobbler's bench with flowers sprouting from the nail compartments, the rush-seated chairs which cruelly pinch the sitter, the strings of gourds and peppers and even half-shucked corn, pendant and rampant around the fireplace. (Incidentally, have you ever tried to dust an ear of half-shucked corn?)

The rooms in this arrangement were just too quaint and darling. Every inconvenience from which our great-great-great-grandparents suffered was revived for their descendants with a merry little twist to incorporate it into modern life. After all, why not? Are we better than they were? Better than those rock-ribbed characters who made the nation? Of course the answer is NO! Then why should we be more comfortable? But let's face it. Do you need a sunbonnet in an autogiro?

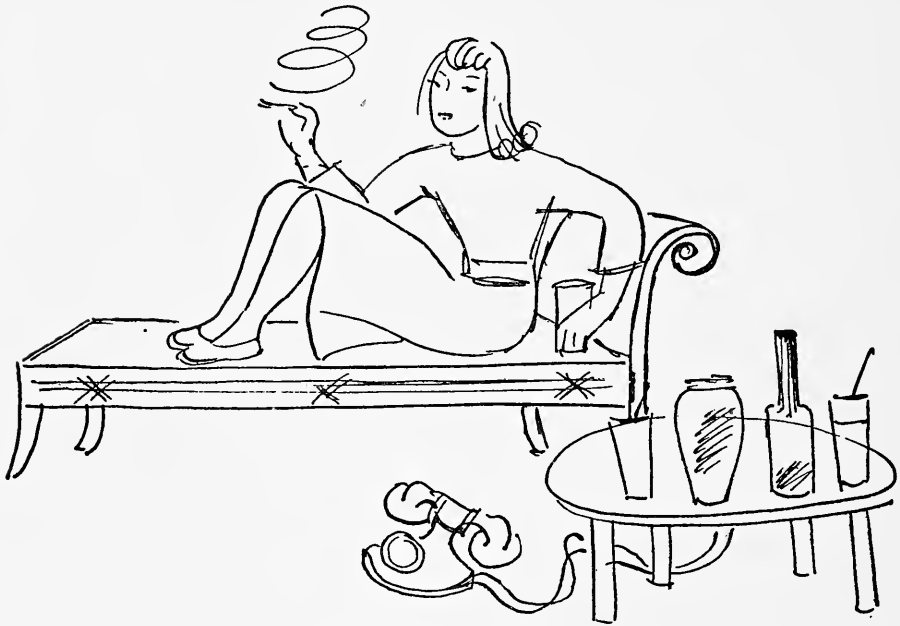


*. . . ye old candle dippe . . .*



*. . . the cobbler's bench with flowers sprouting . . .*

After the SUNBONNET CLOSE came THE FEDERAL ERA. The peculiar specialty of this type of interior, as revived, was the lack of a place to sit. In the drawing room on either side of an electric fireplace with a mantel faintly Adam, nestled two straight little hard-seated Duncan Phyfe chairs, and, before the synthetically flaming logs, a sway-backed tapestry stool. This was balanced at a



. . . a rigid chaise longue on which Madame Récamier would have looked dandy . . .

decent distance by a rigid chaise longue on which Madame Récamier would have looked dandy, but do you often recline at full length when entertaining formally? The Romans did it, but do we? It's a sure thing you can't sit on it, for it is too deep, too hard, and the back is the arm—if the reader is still following. The whole setup was not half as cozy as a room in the Metropolitan Museum, and if anyone



went in for it thinking that it would persuade her teen-age children to take their fun at home, she would inevitably let herself in for a disappointment.

Does this make sense? The customer is hurried here, there, and everywhere, hair hung and breeze shaken between *now* and *then*. No wonder there is confusion in the public mind. There is confusion in the department store organization also. The rug buyer, the textile buyer, the furniture buyer, the glass and china buyer, the quaint old article buyer, are not birds of a feather, nor do they flock together if they can help it. The co-ordinators, so-called, are going crazy trying to bring order out of this chaos of conflicting ideas, and nowhere is there a Superbuyer, a Head, with enough time to see that his department managers are working in harmony and with consistent taste.

It is not only in this country that mad thoughts run riot. From Paris, fountainhead of taste, come pictures of new interiors. And what is this? A boudoir with every inch of wall and ceiling draped in chiffon (a fashion which should have disappeared on the discovery of the microbe), a Greuze or Boucher on the wall next to a Spanish sconce, a white kitty (porcelain) in a little hutch, an ostrich-plumed hat on an embroidered screen. There is an S-shaped love seat for safe love, since each character is incased in a little separate cage, and a birdcage chandelier with, of all things, a clock in the bottom, so that by throwing yourself on the floor and looking up you can tell the time easily. Provided the clock is running, a condition most unlikely to be fulfilled. We are told that this style is a reaction from the long restrictions and dearth of fabrics over there. But whatever it is and whatever caused it, we say NO, NO, NO.

How is the average man to thread his way through this obstacle race of articles and compose a suitable home? It can be done, for

once the commercial purveyors are sure of the public taste, they will cater to it gladly enough.

Suppose that in any one city three or four hundred people hear a lecture on good design, and suppose that each one of them has the enterprise to go to his local stores and ask for certain things he would like to have. The news would filter up to the buyers, and in a little while the articles would be in stock. If you ask for it, you can get it. Why should the designers of labor-saving devices be allowed to forge ahead with the newest samples of their skill, and the designers of other equally useful articles be forced into obscurity? Give the American artists a break, and let this country be recognized for the beauty of its products as well as for the rapidity with which they can be turned out.

The advertising men have become so accustomed to making a loud noise that sometimes they forget how to listen; but the public can make more noise if they try. However, it is one thing to ask and quite another to know what to ask for. Lamentably few have had an adequate explanation of the basic principles of good designing for our time.

Simply because a thing is new and unusual it is not necessarily correct. A chair on skates of aluminum tubing may be startling, but it is not good design. There are three things to remember. A contemporary object should be useful, it should be simple, and it should be attractive. Articles being made all over the country which meet these specifications could be easily available if there were a demand for them.

The Baltimore Museum of Art recently held an exhibition of Contemporary American Crafts, which gathered beauty from Bangor, Maine to San Bernardino, California. There were ceramics, from figures to plates, there was glass in jewel colors and in ice-like purity,

there were pewter and brass and silver, and wooden platters and bowls in shapes that sang. There were textiles of modern, non-crushable weave with designs which meant something. There were enamels and rugs. Some of these articles are shown in the picture section of this book.

The folk-arts were represented, the mountain weavers and the Indians. Most of the small objects needed in a home could have been purchased at this exhibition, and the prices were moderate for the permanent beauty offered. The Museum of Modern Art in New York City has held exhibitions of articles costing under ten dollars, all beautiful and useful in design. Other museums are showing increasing interest in the same idea. Such exhibits are most constructive, as the low price tends to dispel the awe which overtakes people looking at objects in a glass case, and suggests that they themselves might own something so beautiful that a museum would show it.

Most people have heard about the rural crafts, the skills preserved in isolated areas where people had to continue making their own objects. The American folk-objects are not usually so colorful as the work of the European peasants, but they have a quiet dignity and remarkable fitness of design. The Indian work is traditional, done with love and infinite patience, and usually with a ritualistic meaning. The artist-craftsman has more education, a more sophisticated outlook. With a less utilitarian approach, he sometimes designs for beauty alone. All of these things are here, ready to hand, waiting only for the public to realize their value. How pitiful it is that ugliness should be foisted on people when they are searching for beauty to have and to love.

In the belief that the public will be eager to avail themselves of hand-made articles if they know how to get them, a partial list of some of the leading craftsmen in the country has been added as an

appendix to this book. It cannot, of course, be all-inclusive, but I hope that it will give some encouragement to artists who are trying to make a contribution to their own age, as well as serving to guide the many people who have not known where to look.

In a fishing village north of New York, a Portuguese immigrant built a little house for his family. He built with pride and thoroughness. Every joint fitted exactly, there was not a crack between the boards of the oak floor, there was not a rough place in the plaster. He was a craftsman who understood good workmanship, and he secured it. He raised a strong sea wall around a strictly functional little garden, where a grafted apple tree bore three varieties of fruit, where peppers and tomatoes, squash and melons provided food and color, and flowers grew among them just for love. He put a brick terrace under his grape arbor and took his meals there looking over the harbor. In all this he knew what he was doing. He worked in accordance with his traditions. Although the house is only a few feet from the sea, it is so stout that it rode out a hurricane without damage. There is not a more honest little house in the world.

But when it was finished, he wanted to furnish it in the American style. He was proud of the new country of which he had become a citizen and of the modest but solid success he had made of it. He was now a man of property who could afford to buy several sets of furniture at once.

And he did.

For his kitchen he bought an overhead light made of neon tubes, and a dinette set of a drab gray trimmed with blue lines. For the sitting room he bought a suite in dark blue and maroon plush similar to the upholstery of day coaches. For the bedroom, a set of furniture catafalque-like in shape and of indistinguishable style, but

decorated with beading and a motif of bowknots and garlands glued on. It was in the dining room, however, that he really let himself go after the finest and fanciest that his money would buy: a set of gray washed oak, pinchedly Gothic, upon which the jig saw had done its worst, which was pasted over with flat fretwork in imitation of elaborate carving and picked out with gilding just in case the curlicues were not enough. Nothing more utterly ugly, cheap, and meretricious could have been devised, and it was upon this that he proudly beamed as being typically American.

This is a sad story, and one which is often re-enacted in many variants. And those responsible for it have done no service to their country.

## WHAT IS A DECORATOR?

IT IS TIME to speak of a group who may be helpful to you if you feel bewildered at the thought of planning your new house—that is to say, of the Interior Decorators. About them are various opinions, of which the lowest was probably expressed by two street urchins. One caught sight of a sign in a shop window and inquired, “Hey, Bud, what’s an Interior Decorator?” The other answered with jaunty sophistication, “Oh, just a paper hanger with ideas.”

Nevertheless, when you begin your search to express whatever is tucked away in the corners of your personality, you may find translating it into terms of inanimate objects and nebulous wall treatment a very difficult business. You may have seen many houses and rooms, but never have experienced the actual composition of one. The trial and error method is expensive, mistakes in color or fabric cost money as well as trouble and time. Or you may find yourself forced to live with something you dislike if you cannot afford to rectify the mistake. You may try to shop for yourself, with disastrous results, or you may have a friend in the wholesale market who will crack it for you, to your unending regret. Or perhaps you are just too busy to give the problem proper attention. Under any of these conditions, the best thing to do would be to get some help from a professional.

This seems to be, in the eyes of the public, a last resort and an unthinkable extravagance. You could not dream of putting your most

precious possession, your home, into the hands of someone else. You want it to look like yourself, or what have we been talking about? But do you really know enough about yourself to get that result? And do you know enough about sources of supply, workmen, and all the details involved?

The average person has seen little save the furniture store of his home town, the proprietor of which goes to market in Chicago, buys the unspeakable wares offered him by manufacturers from all over the country, and sells them for profit enough to go back and buy twice as much. Thus are spread dreary and ugly rooms over the face of the land. The decorator has helped to lift his neighbor out of this miserable rut, for he is generally a person of some sensitivity, who has entered the profession because he had enough interest in houses to try to improve them. He may have learned only a little about what he is doing, or he may have learned much, but in any case he has at least taken a step toward improving the comfort and appearance of American homes.

When you choose your decorator, however, here is the basic criterion by which to judge him: he should start by *asking* you, and not by *telling* you.

A good decorator should fit your house to your needs, instead of imposing upon you a style of his own. If a decorator has a recognizable style, a sort of trade-mark which sticks out like a sore thumb in the home of every client, the chances are that he is not very intelligent. The finished product should reflect *you*, and not the decorator. Not every personality is expressed by plaster feathers and cabbage roses, or by black lacquer screens and misty mirrors.

So if you appeal for help, start out by saying what you like. If your way of life is served by a wooden salad bowl, say so in the first place. If you prefer silver or crystal, say that too. It will indicate your

notion of a pleasant place to live, and your house will be your own. Also tell your decorator frankly how much you want to spend. It is his first duty to use your money wisely, and if you take him into your confidence, he can save you a great deal.

As an example of the sort of thing a decorator should be able to do, look at the dining room in plate xiii. On the floor is a hand-made carpet, the design of which is a map of the property. Prohibitively expensive, you will say. On the contrary, because the decorator knew of some old women who had started a small private business of rug-making, he was able to procure it for about the same price as a good quality of commercial broadloom.

On a less elaborate scale, the intelligent decorator of today is more than ever willing to accept small commissions. It has been estimated that before World War II there were in this country about three hundred thousand people with incomes of four hundred dollars a week and up, and about seven thousand with incomes of ten thousand dollars a week or more. The lucky decorator who caught a client like that could perhaps afford to forget the average citizen.

But now the base has broadened. Millions will have incomes of twenty-five dollars a week or more, six million will have two hundred a week or better. To balance this, the ever-loving government has operated on the incomes of the rich by means of taxes, and has left five hundred a week almost the peak figure possible. In other words, people are buying now who could never afford to buy before, but the fabulous clients have almost disappeared.

The orders are smaller, but there are infinitely more of them. Forty per cent of the sales in one of New York's large furniture galleries is being made to new names. Defense workers are buying, returned soldiers are buying, Mr. and Mrs. America are on their way up again, and eager as never before to improve and beautify their homes.





*. . . Mr. and Mrs. America are eager to beautify their homes.*

The most progressive decorators will adapt themselves to these changed conditions. They will organize their method of giving advice. If they are really smart, they will build up reference files showing how to acquire tasteful but inexpensive furnishings. They will be prepared to act as consultants for a small fee.

With a moderate amount of such professional attention to the low

and middle income groups, the houses of America might be improved out of all recognition, and the things which man hath wrought in the United States might become fit to be placed beside the magnificence of our natural scenery.

So do not be deterred from seeking out a decorator by the fact that your budget is slim, but try, above all, to find one who will consider the client. Your good decorator should study you, build around you, discover needs which you yourself had not thought of, and fit your house to your life. The sad results of having a decorator take the bit in his teeth can be disastrous to both the rich and the poor.

There was once in one of our larger states an elderly lady who found herself suddenly possessed of a fortune. Since the money did not begin to flow from the kitchen faucet until she was well past middle life, she did not hesitate to send for help when she planned to build a house. She specified only that hers had to be the finest mansion in the state—and she got the most expensive one, there is no doubt about that.

The iron grille gates are opened by an electric eye, and the gardens are especially heated so that a sudden frost will not blast the camellias. The flowers are planted around reflecting pools with indirect lighting, and all the bushes are labeled so that even the owner can tell what they are. Inside her house there is a silver staircase with a crystal handrail, a Louis XVI library with sets of everything bound in gold-tooled leather, a long hall with colonnades of Grecian pedestals topped by the truncated heads of people unknown to her, a Directoire dining room with taffeta curtains, and an informal little breakfast room with a silver inlaid marble floor and silver chairs to sit upon.

There is no evidence of life in any part of this. There is no evidence that the old lady has any existence in it except to wander

through, still looking like a weather-beaten plainswoman in a washable housegown, and conducting curious visitors on tours.

She opens the sixteen foot mahogany doors with the gold door-knobs, looks at the banquet table large enough for twenty, and says, "They call this the dining room." She goes down to the game room whose walls are covered by a mural rioting with cowboys in action—hardly a square yard without a lariat and a yippee—and she giggles, "A fellow in New York painted it and sent it down. He was never here. He thinks it's like this." She parts from the tourist at the door with a somewhat wistful smile. "It was nice seeing you. I love to share what I've got."

The visitors are never taken upstairs. It is to be hoped that, somewhere above the silver staircase, there is a big sunny room with soft chairs and a footstool, an open fire, a window full of plants, and all the homelike comforts that old ladies love.

Far happier was the experience of an elderly couple in New England who, after battling for years with a Victorian monster of a house, decided to give up, tear it down, and start afresh. The architect and decorator they consulted took account of their greatest asset, a magnificent view, allowed for their love of flowers and of warmth in the winter. They have now a compact little house so easy to care for that they can manage it themselves, so placed as to catch the maximum of view and sunlight, and in the winter they can sit in their inside garden, bathed in sun, and smell their own gardenias while they look out at eighteen inches of snow.

The moral of all this is simple: you *can* get what you want.

Ideally, the decorator should be like the conductor of an orchestra. He should accent and subdue, direct, lead, and encourage to climax, much as a conductor handles his musicians in order to present the music of the composer. But the decorator has the double duty of

composition plus directing the execution. The building and its inhabitants are his reason and his inspiration. It is his duty to create something suitable to both eye and body. This is not easy. The products presented to him for use by the manufacturers are the instruments whereby he should be able to compose fine rooms. If the instruments are poor, he cannot use them, but must design his own. Always he should remember that fashion is not to be considered in the composition of the home, for fashion is temporary and home is not. The *modern* home need not be garish or startling. There is enough confusion outside our homes today. So let us strive for peace within them.

Such is the ideal; but, in reality, decorators fall into two general categories:

I. The charm-gatherers

II. The designers

The charm-gatherers, male and female, flit hither and yon to this and that, gathering up bits and pieces. They design not, neither do they spin, but collect from a world of horrors the least horrible according to their own taste and knowledge. It is they who are most likely to copy the styles of dead designers, and to imitate the modes of the past. But the results are of questionable value, for they contribute nothing original.

The decorators of the second category design and cause to be made the items which they feel are needed. It goes without saying that there are good designers and bad ones, just as some cooks are better than others. They may design for special orders, or they may design for manufacturers. But whether they are successful or not, they are at least trying to contribute something to modern life.

It is interesting that the most usual criticism of the designing profession as a whole is not based on any failure in their work, but

upon their business methods. The claim is not that they fail to help the interiors upon which they work, but that they charge too much for their services.

If they are merchants, then they must have those shops of sundry items which need to be maintained under considerable overhead. They must buy at one price and sell at another, and their success or failure depends on their merchandising ability. Like all professionals, they require offices for consultation, for a library of documents, and perhaps for some examples of their own work. And certainly, since they are professionals, they are as entitled to charge a fee for their work as an architect, a doctor, or a lawyer, and the fee should be commensurate with the ability of the decorator.

The American Institute of Decorators, a national organization formed to raise the standards of the profession, has set up stiff requirements for admittance. If, in your search for a decorator, you can find a local member of the A.I.D., you can be sure of getting as good help in furnishing problems as is available in your neighborhood, although not all of the best talent has enrolled in the membership.

The Institute has formulated the following definition: "A decorator is one who by training and experience is qualified to plan, design, and execute interiors and their furnishings, and to supervise the various arts and crafts essential to their completion."

This definition reduces their function to the most practical terms, and the essential word in it is "qualified." Even so, the very name of the profession is erroneous and inaccurate. We think of "decorating" as a special garnishing for an unusual occasion. We "decorate" for Christmas or for a wedding, with the understanding that we do not have to be prickled with holly or wreathed in smilax for the rest of the year. But we build our homes to make ourselves a lasting

background, a haven of rest, and a point of reference from which we can face the world. By our homes we are judged. If they are dull, so are we, in all probability, and if untidy, ditto, ditto.

The decorators should therefore start each job by studying the client. This formula will work for any income group. If this were generally done, trade publications would never send out questionnaires which inquire in all seriousness: "What style swings or changes do you anticipate and why?"; and go on to the real sixty-four dollar question: "How important is *blue*? What shade?"

It would be to the interest of the decorators if they would consistently study the client, for they would then find themselves in a position of greater security and importance. They would be selling a fundamental commodity not subject to economic fluctuations or changes in the social order. They would be selling contentment.

## THE COTTAGE HOME

**I**F ANYONE still feels, in spite of all that has been said, that decorating is a subject having no interest for the average man, let us consider what it can do for the cottage. The domestic worker in this country seems to be as doomed to extinction as the passenger pigeon. As a result, more and more people in every income group are moving into small homes which the housewife can manage by herself or with a minimum of help. In no field have modern ideas been more fertile and more helpful than in designing and planning for the cottage home.

Considering this trend, our modern architects and designers have thought back to the early days of simplicity in this country, and have remembered the big old kitchens in farm houses and villages which were the center of the family life. From paring knife to dishpan, the production of three meals a day for a family will take a big slice out of any housewife's time. There is no real reason why she should spend her most active waking hours shut up in a little space apparently designed for a dining car chef, and as coldly white and sanitary as a hospital lavatory.

We are beginning to get many modern plans to turn the kitchen back into a room where father can sit and read his paper while his wife finishes her job, where the children can do their homework, where the baby's pen can stand in the corner, and the busy mother can hold all the strands of her life in her hands at one time. She

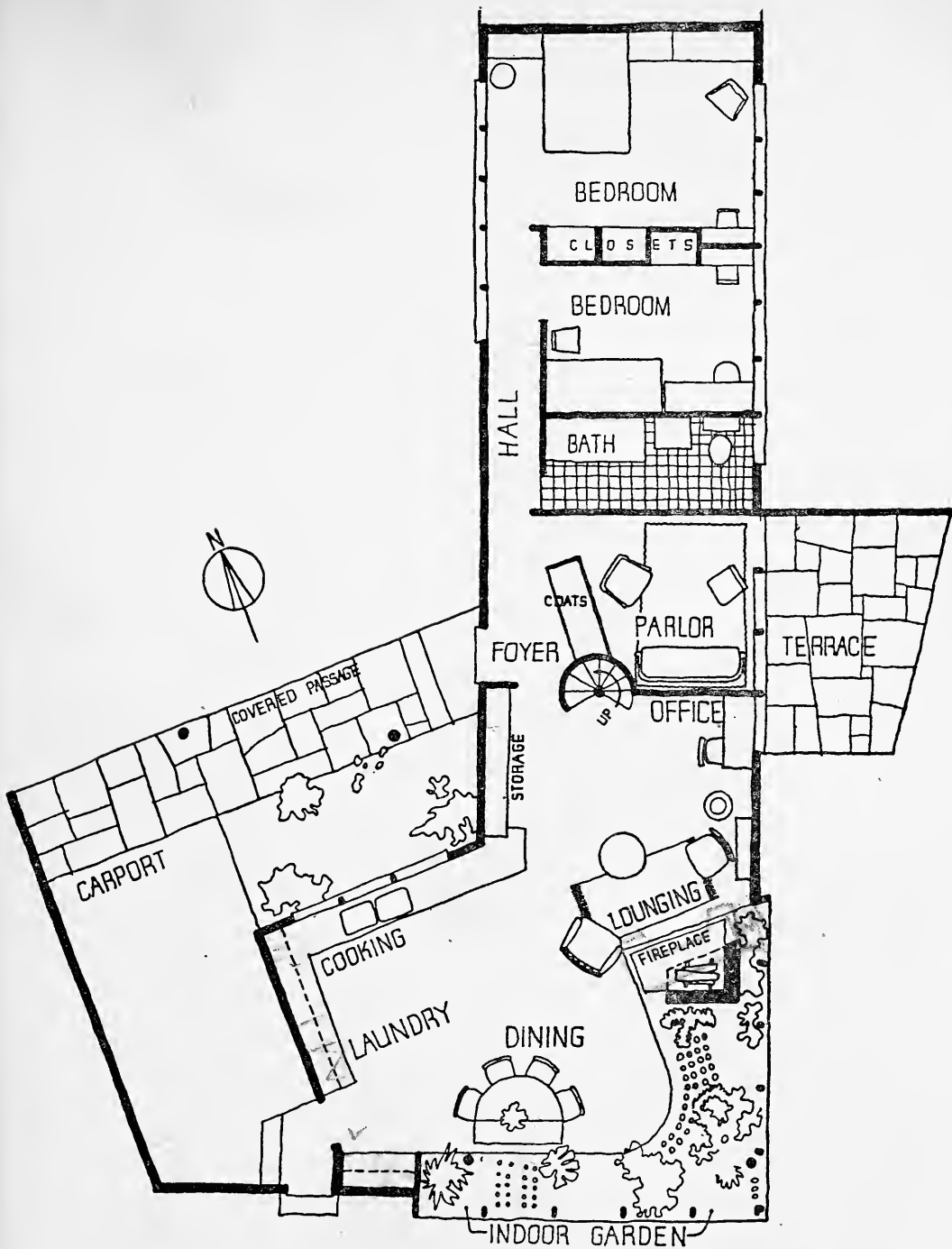
will even have a comfortable and inviting place to sit down and read or rest during the odd quarter-hours which occur occasionally of waiting for something to finish boiling or baking.

The accompanying sketch by Jedd Stowe Reisner and Max O. Urbahn is one of the best and most ingenious along these lines, and is included to show what can be done. You can see from the floor plan that the cooking area is confined to one corner and looks out toward the front door so that the housewife can see what visitors or tradesmen are approaching. The dining table, which is of a good size with comfortable seats, is accessible to the stove, and yet the family sit facing the indoor garden, built into the corner window and practically a greenhouse on a small scale. The fireplace, open on two sides, stands in a corner of this area and projects into the room, dividing it into two sections each different in character. The back of the chimney provides additional warmth for the plants.

In front of the fireplace is a comfortable seating arrangement, not of stuffy upholstery which might absorb kitchen odors, yet inviting enough with a lamp and a shelf of books to encourage idleness and companionability. Beyond it there is a table desk by a window where the children can do their homework or the housewife her accounts and her planning. The end wall is made by the circular staircase going up to the attic where the children can have their bedrooms or a play room. The ceiling of this busy room should be high, if the budget of the owners will permit, in order to insure good ventilation. It is more than a kitchen, it is the true living core of the house.

There is a small formal parlor beyond the staircase wall, where visitors who are not on intimate terms with the family can be entertained. A grown-up daughter might have a date with a beau there, or someone else who felt like seeking privacy and seclusion might





*"The Cottage Home."*

find it. It is no longer, however, the important room. The master bedroom should be on beyond, and the children on the same floor or in the attic, whichever is found to be the most practical.

It is hard to believe that any family, whatever their circumstances, would not enjoy this comfortable and friendly room, where so many activities could be carried on harmoniously and without conflicting with each other, and where the shelf of growing plants and the fireplace contribute beauty and cheerfulness.

The walls of this room could be painted a cheerful color, or they could be of plywood, which a good workman could install for himself. The plywood might cost more at the beginning, but would have the advantage of never needing to be renewed or done over. The pots and pans could hang on the wall as they do in French provincial kitchens, and a few shelves with bright edging could hold the everyday dishes near the table where they will be easy to take down.

Everything in such a room or such a house should be planned for the maximum of convenience and labor-saving. And when you are thinking things out, make a place for everything. In this way you will not find yourself, after you have moved in, with a mechanical orange squeezer which you will have to hold in your lap, *faute de mieux*, or with Junior's scooter kept under the bed.

The fact is, home is a dangerous place. You think that you are safe there, but you are not. The National Security Council reports that between Pearl Harbor and V-J Day, sixteen times as many Americans were killed or injured in their homes as on all the battle fronts. And they list as the leading cause of these accidents: disorder.

The same Council has planned a housekeeping closet, to hold everything from the vacuum cleaner to the oil can. You can write for a blueprint of this and need never again be cracked on the head

by the dust pan when you are reaching for a can of scouring powder. Never again need you take all your things off a shelf in order to secure the bottle of furniture polish behind them. Neatness is attractive in any home, but in a small home it is essential.

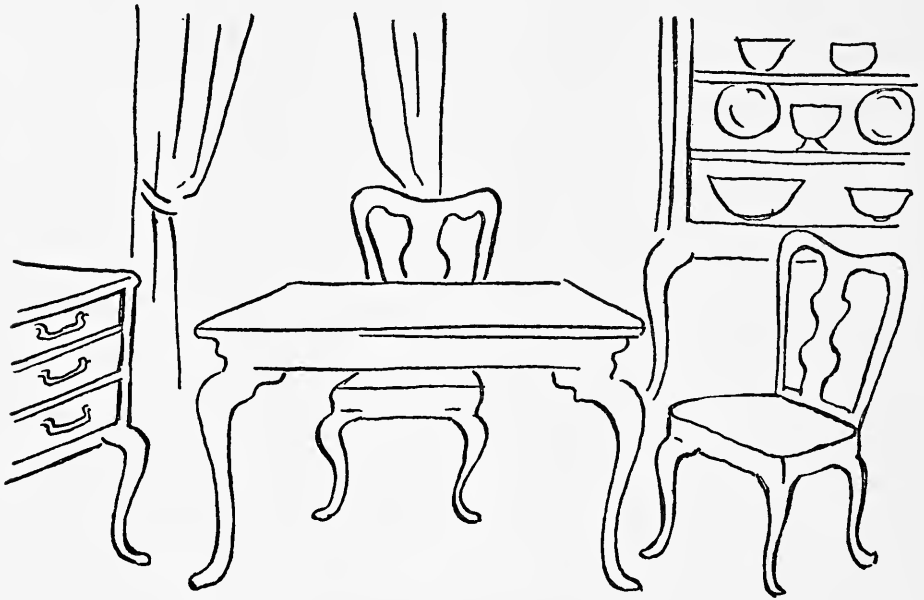
By building one large, multiple-purpose room, you can take the greatest curse off the little house, the feeling of being shut up in several cramped boxes. By having a well-planned place for every belonging, you can keep the one large room in a shining and inviting condition.

When you decorate and select the furniture for your cottage, remember that the little house, more than any other, needs to achieve the dignity of complete integrity, the simplicity and usefulness which is the essence of the modern idea. If you buy few things, you should judge everything according to its fitness, not according to mistaken ideas of what looks successful or a little fancier than the home two doors down the street. A limited budget is no reason for having bad taste. You can be rich and have bad taste just as well.

In selecting wall colors, the use of one color throughout will increase the sense of space. If this seems too monotonous, select soft colors which blend, and avoid sharp contrasts which shock the eye and jar the nerves when they are badly related.

When you come to the furniture, if your budget is short, do not try impatiently to get everything at once. Short budgets need disciplined buying more than long ones. Try to have each item so well made and of such quality that it will last as long as its owner. Few people realize how little it takes to start housekeeping, nor how much fun it is to add a little at a time. But by this method you have the excitement of collecting over a period of years, and your home has always the freshness of something new.

Never buy sets of furniture. They give the effect of oppressive monotony, and all the more in a small home where a bedroom suite or a living room suite would mean that you were condemned to look at only one kind of thing for the rest of your life. If you can afford only one good upholstered piece at a time, buy only one, and cover it with a strong neutral material so that it will stay covered as long as you want to use it. Homespuns are wonderful for this purpose.

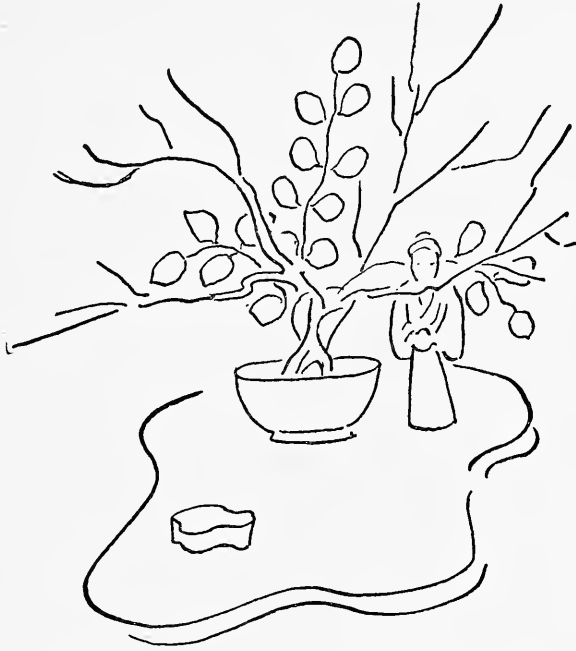


*Never buy sets of furniture.*

Some of them have been known to last on sofas or chairs for twenty years and more.

Select honest fabrics for upholstery and for drapery, not fabrics which are cheap imitations of more expensive goods. Monk's cloth or theatrical gauze will make you more effective curtains than poor roller reproductions of chintz originally designed for hand manufacture with wood blocks. The monk's cloth will cost half as much.

If you choose such a simple, heavy, but inexpensive material, you can get more, and your curtains will not look skimpy—one of the worst and most common faults of cheaper draperies. The curtains will not have to be lined, they hang well, clean easily, and, because they are neutral, you will never tire of them.

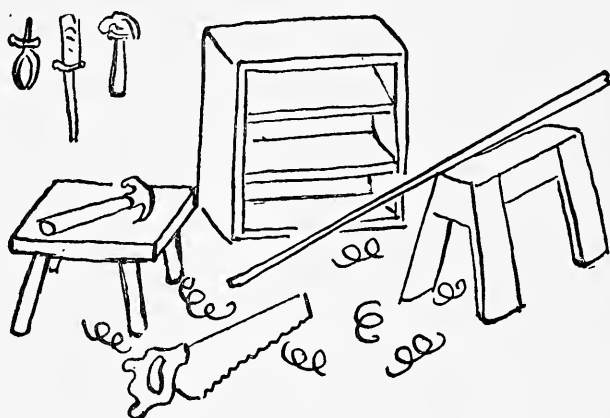


*Naked branches cleverly arranged . . .*

Avoid bargains. Nothing is so expensive in the long run, for if an object is marked down, it is usually because there is something wrong with it. The more one looks around as one collects item by item, the keener grows the knowledge and appreciation of what one is buying. There are so many things which cost nothing except a keen eye, but which will make a beautiful effect in a room: for example, a piece of pink quartz rock, an interesting shell, a gray and ocean-washed root of a tree. Naked branches cleverly arranged

will pinch-hit for expensive flowers. They can be just as beautiful, and will be more interesting, because not everyone has the imagination to use them.

Above all, avoid reproductions. Avoid the ghastly imitations of more expensive stuff and aim at a sturdy simplicity. If anyone in your family can use a hammer, the best practice of all would be to make a lot of things yourselves. In that way, your pieces would have real individuality. Almost anyone can build shelves, toy or linen chests, stools, and such. Or you can buy well-made and sturdy



*Almost anyone can build . . .*

unfinished furniture and paint it yourself. Search for well-joined corners and smoothly running drawers, and avoid pieces that look as if they had been tacked together.

Do not be afraid to improvise. An orange crate covered with a yard of plaid gingham makes a more appealing, if temporary, side table than the hard-boiled reproduction advertised in the Sunday paper for \$9.98. Save up for one made on a craftsman's bench with loving care. It will cost you three times as much, but will give you everlasting pleasure.

It is not bad economy, in the long run, to spend all your money on a very few lovely things, and cobble up any other necessities out of inexpensive materials which can later be thrown away without regret. Your extravagances will warm your heart every time you look at them, and your home will be all the more attractive because it has very little in it. But never buy something just because it is cute, and then wonder what in the world you will do with it when you get it home. Do not buy even as much as a spoon for which you do not see an immediate need.

Empty spaces are delightful in a cottage home. Clutter is your worst enemy. A word of warning: since your space is small, buy small furniture and keep everything in scale. Massive stuff will be out of place, and will end by making you feel like jumping out of the window.

Everything that has been said about furnishing the small house applies also, of course, to furnishing the small apartment. No one who will follow these very simple principles need feel discouraged about future results because of a slim pocketbook. You do not have to spend a lot of money all at once in order to have a beautiful home.

The magazines which deal with homemaking have not always helped the small houseowner achieve the integrity of being like himself and not like somebody else. For example, not long ago an article was written and photographs were taken of a model workingman's home. At the last minute, the writer of the article, wishing to put both feet foremost at once, sent for a dozen roses (at \$10 a dozen) to fill a bowl on the table. She was with difficulty dissuaded from this fantastic step. In the end she was brought around to using materials which cost nothing. She put on the bookcase an arrangement of leaves and grasses with some butterfly weed which was growing no farther away than across the road, and on the table a

wooden chopping bowl full of apples and peanuts. They gave the room the necessary color, and what is more they were appropriate. They had integrity, and integrity is always beautiful.

Since the small home is likely to be fairly close to others in the same category, I should like to make a few suggestions about the striking effects which can be produced by unified color and planting.

Some Federal Housing projects, for defense and other workers, have recently proved that by very simple means such colonies can be made really attractive. The government in planning them sent experts to travel widely over the country and make a study of the most effective colors to use on the exteriors of houses. The four colors finally settled on were as old as America itself. They were: 1) White, like the villages of New England. 2) Red, like the New England barns. 3) Gray, like the weather-beaten cottages in fishing villages. 4) Soft yellow, like many old houses in Virginia. The red and white were sharp and fresh, the gray and yellow blended in and softened the effect.

The gray, white, and yellow were used in these war-workers' towns in alternating blocks, with the red for occasional accents. The garbage-disposers and the signposts, for example, were painted a bright red so that they would be conspicuous and therefore used. The very simple planting was planned to contrast with the houses—yellow flowers in front of white, white flowers in front of yellow, pink in front of gray. The tenants were given a list of nine varieties for which the seed packets altogether would not cost more than 45 cents. There were sweet alyssum and forgetmenots for early spring. There were petunias, of course, in white and pink, and marigolds, four o'clocks, zinnias, and dwarf phlox. For vines there were morning glories and moon-vines—the latter particularly because the



white flowers are beautiful at night. Workmen who were especially interested were given suggestions for scented flowers to perfume the air.

Permanent planting was not used, because the towns were only temporary and were not expected to be anything else, but the money spent on planning proved to have been well invested, because the workers who found themselves located in one of these attractive colonies were content to stay there instead of restlessly trying to move on.

A few of our leading industrialists have tried out similar ideas in towns built near decentralized small plants, but so far there are all too few. Because workmen's houses are of necessity simple, they have usually been considered unworthy of the attention of an architect, and their construction has been turned over to the shyster builder, with no limitations on his rapacious economies. We have become all too familiar with the miles of jerry-built pigeonholes on the outskirts of industrial cities; with the unpainted shacks of the lower grade of farm labor; with the dreary red chicken-coops around the black mouths of the mines.

And yet—we have all seen on the porches of the most desolate mining camps rows of geraniums in painted tin cans, or on a clothes-line, between a shack and a one-holer, a patchwork quilt of bright colors and firm design. These things speak for themselves to those who have the heart to listen. There is a will to beauty in every man which will grow if it has the opportunity.

Even without making sweeping changes in construction, an amazing amount can be done with the use of a little paint, or by the simpler expedient of persuading the inhabitants to agree on planting a single type of growing thing. For example, in almost any industrial community where there is a degree of permanence, each



. . . mining camps . . .

householder might be persuaded to plant a rambler rose of a hardy variety beside his door. When all of these bloom at once, the settlement would be transformed into a place of beauty.

What has been said about worker's colonies is equally true for homes in small towns, suburbs, and other communities. So long as green things continue to grow out of the earth, nothing on top of it need be wholly ugly. There was a little town in the southwest so hideous that people hated to go there to shop, until a woman with vision talked everyone into planting cherokee roses. These grew madly in the grateful way flowers have, and now when their yellow buds open, visitors come for miles to admire the beauty of them.

Charleston, South Carolina, draws tourists for its azaleas; Washington, D. C., for its cherry blossoms; Portland, Oregon, for its roses. The same thing could be done on a simple scale for every village



*In Sweden . . . workers' colonies . . .*

in the country, if the inhabitants would only put their heads together and make a plan. If you cannot persuade your town, try persuading your street to undertake group planting. Or, if not your street, at least your block. The results would be surprising. Imagine a drab block on the outskirts of some city with every house painted a pleasing color and a window box on every stoop full of some inexpensive and easily grown flower such as petunias.

Sweden, a country wise in the humanities, understands these simple things better than we do. On the outskirts of Stockholm there are cottage colonies which are a joy to see, although they are no larger or more elaborate than those in other countries. They are white and solid, and their charm lies in their planting, for they are smothered in flowers. Every house has a postage stamp garden of

its own in which flowers and vegetables alternate; but that is not all. There are plants along window shelves, there are pots full of growing things hung against the walls and beside the doors. There are even flowers growing on the roofs. The inhabitants of these houses have an interest to come home to. They are *making* something. They have a creative outlet for their leisure hours after the long routine in the factories.

It might be better if public works in this country spent less on parks, and more on encouraging each citizen to get a little space of his own where he could work things out in his own way. In the average park, you can only walk and look at planting which you must not touch. Yet it is likely that a child would really be happier in a little yard of his own than in a concrete play pen behind a spiked iron fence. A white mouse that a child can feed means more to him than a lion at which he can only stare. People young and old like to *do* things, not merely to observe them. This is all the more necessary in modern times when the machine has taken most of the initiative out of the daily task and made man into a robot repeating a limited set of movements for an end result he does not see.

Where there are parks, they should be full of amusements, of places which can be used for dancing, sitting, drinking beer, bowling, swimming, shooting. What is the use of endless stretches of trees and drives? Trees and drives can be better obtained in these days of easy transportation by going a few miles into the country. Again in Scandinavia, these things have been worked out successfully. Tivoli Park in Copenhagen cannot be forgotten by anyone who has seen it. It is right in the heart of the city where everyone can reach it. There is enough planting to make it attractive, but the public money is not largely spent on planting, it is spent on almost every sort of good cheap fun. Nothing is omitted, not even a roller

coaster. And the people flock to it. No one has really seen Copenhagen who has not spent a happy evening in Tivoli Park.

But this may seem like too prolonged a digression from that cottage which we were so happily furnishing with even more care for integrity and value than we would use in a larger house. I firmly believe that the promotion of initiative in the individual home is as important as parks for your town. Although people have a natural tendency to go on living in the same old rut, they can be blasted out of it, if improvement is made visible to them. If the cottage dweller will consistently be true to himself and his circumstances instead of trying to imitate in a cheap form a more expensive way of living, he will find that the little home has advantages which a palace cannot give.

Every homemaker might do well to take to heart the story of prize-winning Sally, who made so much out of such simple materials, and who had a *purpose* in everything she did. Then indeed we would have thousands of little homes in America, all differing as individuals differ, all full of objects made by hand and with love, all places where people were expressing what was in them and doing what they want to do.

That would be a real step toward Utopia, a Utopia which mechanical devices such as washing machines and radios, with their negation of personality, can never bring. The men and women in such homes would know that increased privilege brought increased opportunity, and also increased responsibility.

And that should be what we mean when we speak of "the century of the common man."

## THE HOME AND THE CHILD

LET'S FACE IT. Many or most of the ten million hypothetical new American homes will be inhabited by a species called CHILDREN. About these beings there are a number of opinions, but the best minds seem to be agreed that they are quite definitely PEOPLE, and should be treated as such.

All of us have at one time or another had the doubtful privilege of being entertained in homes where the child was king. A woman in New York recently rented a furnished house to a family whose little Betsy was allowed a free hand. When the lease ended, there was literally not one piece of furniture which could be used without being done over. Lipstick squiggles adorned the pictures and the walls, the lacquer had been picked off the sewing table while it was used as a desk, the curtains had been torn down and fastened up again with tacks. The springs were broken in the soft chairs, the stretchers and legs in the hard ones. Even the parquet floor had been dug up here and there. It cost 750 dollars to make the place again fit for human habitation. Betsy should have had a position with a firm of house wreckers.

Admittedly, this is an extreme case, but there are too many somewhat like it. Otherwise, why should we encounter that nervous provision of hardhearted landlords: "NO dogs or children"? It is all unnecessary, because, believe it or not, just as dogs can be taught tricks, children can be taught manners—manners in the true and

fundamental sense of respect for the feelings, the tastes, and the property of others.

As a first step in this direction, give them a play space of their own. One happy and fruitful mother of a brood of three called in a



*Lipstick squiggles . . .*

decorator to help plan a new house. While he perched anxiously on the cleaner portion of an upholstered chair, baby David, aged two, wound himself in and out of the curtains playing peep-o, Little Nancy, age five, paraded around giving a fashion show, and young Charles, going on seven, ensconced himself in a lion's cage com-

posed of two chairs and the piano. It was plain that mother had gone down for the count.

"My husband wants us to get the best," she said harriedly, "but of course we can't have anything in light colors on the furniture because the children put their feet on it. I suppose we will just have to wait for them to grow up."



. . . a lion's cage . . .

This looked to the decorator like a process which would take too long. He swallowed his comments and went to the heart of the problem. The children's quarters were designed before the rest of the house.

Since this family was moderately well off, each child had a little cubicle off a larger play room. The cubicles were furnished with articles scaled to child size. The little wardrobes were low enough



so that they could hang up their own things, the beds were low enough so that it did not hurt to fall out of them. In the play room, each child had a chair so low that he could rest his feet on the floor, and a table whose round top raised up as a lid for a toy box which formed the pedestal. This served a double purpose, for, since the lid lifted up, it meant that each table automatically had to be cleared at the end of play time, and then the table was ready for a supper tray. The chairs had finger holes in the arms so that they could



. . . a strip of blackboard . . .

easily be dragged from place to place, but the holes were so large that little fingers could not get stuck in them. Except for this strictly functional furniture and the playthings, the room was bare.

The floor in this ideal play room was covered with waxed linoleum, but there was a small washable rug by each bed to catch bare feet. On one wall the children could write as much as they pleased, because it had a strip of blackboard at the proper height, and on another wall there was a strip of cork on which could be thumb-

tacked whatever pin-ups caught their fancy. A third wall had a padded and comfortable bench built in near a window where any adults condemned to be present might sit without fear of a sneak attack from the rear or a total bouleversement.

As the children grew old enough, a dart board could be hung on this wall, the linoleum could be marked with paint for a bowling alley with rubber balls and pins. Older still, and a gramophone would allow for dancing. The only ornaments in the room were some amusing figures carved in wood. The lamps had metal or wooden bases. Everything was solid and durable, for there is no use in putting in a child's room a lot of things he must not touch. They used the simplest of curtains, or none at all. They used non-crushable, washable, inexpensive bedspreads. The furniture was brightly painted, the walls neutral and washable. The room was cheerful, and also the more attractive because it was strictly functional. It served precisely the purpose it was meant to serve.

It was then explained to the children that these quarters belonged to them; that each child owned his or her own furniture therein; that visitors would arrive there by invitation only, and would behave as the children expected while visiting. And the corollary to all this was that the rest of the house belonged to the grownups and was strictly out of bounds for the children.

The interesting thing is that the plan worked. The joys of the home were delighted with their room and consequently respected the rest of the house. The living room sofa could be upholstered in rosy beige without fear, and the gray and gold paper in the hall was not used for doodling to release the juvenile subconscious. Children respond to beauty. It was found that they were quickly proud of having a beautiful home.

It is not necessary to take care of the children on an elaborate

scale. The simpler their room, the more fun they can have in it. But give them a place of their own. This will work for every sort of child. A large orphanage had an epidemic of stealing among its charges. After consulting a psychologist, it was decided to give each inmate a small chest of drawers beside his bed in the large dormitories, and a few private possessions to keep in the drawers. The stealing stopped.

Children really *are* people and they *can* learn how to behave.

The next step after establishing a feeling of ownership is to teach them that ownership means responsibility. After all, you hope that someday they will have homes of their own to take care of. Why let some of the facts of life come as a complete shock? Dishes will have to be washed, floors swept, tables dusted, as long as the birds and the bees keep flying, and the children may as well learn things in the right way while they are young. Buz does it. But Buz won't do everything, and what's so hard about dish-washing, anyway?

At the very least, the young should have the responsibility of keeping their own rooms in order, and they should pick up and put away their own things. It is not necessary to be too tenderhearted about enforcing this rule. If you shrink from the brisk use of the hairbrush, there are other methods equally effective, based on an operation of cause and effect. The mother of one particularly sloppy little girl finally announced that belongings which were not in place by a certain time in the morning would be quite simply and definitely thrown away. Several losses then took place, which both sides had the tact not to mention to each other. By the end of the first week, the room was kept in fairly good order and has so remained.

From the care of his own things, the child can advance to taking some responsibility for the rest of the house. After all, what are we trying to produce, responsible citizens of a community, or horse-

men for Genghis Khan? The hardworking mother who boasted that never in her life had she stayed in bed in the morning, and asked her sixteen-year-old daughter to bring her a cup of coffee, was neither very smart nor contributing much to the development of her child.

There was once a very much brighter woman who had a tiny but clean house in the remote upper Bronx and made a living by boarding children for a charitable organization. She usually had three or four girls of grammar school age staying with her for weeks or years, until other arrangements could be made for them. They all made their own beds, they were all assigned various duties around the home, such as helping with the dishes, emptying the wastebaskets, setting the table, doing simple ironing or washing. When they came home from school, they all had to go around to the back door, take off their shoes on the little enclosed back porch, and put on house slippers before they stepped inside.

How bleak, you will say. Not at all. The woman had her own little daughter under exactly the same regulations. The home was fresh and orderly, everyone in it made a contribution toward it, and, consequently, everyone felt that she had a place in the scheme of things. Wherever those children went, and whatever vicissitudes they later encountered—and they encountered plenty—they always wanted to go back and visit Mrs. Harding, and to stay with her whenever they could. She taught them the beauty of cleanliness, responsibility, and co-operation. Of course she gave them love as well, but love and discipline are not enemies.

It is an appalling feature of American life today that our children are taught more about taking than about giving; that they hear constant chatter about theories of what can be done for them, and little or nothing about what they can do for themselves and for

others. And yet, a sense of being useful is the beginning of happiness for any individual.

A group of do-gooders in one of our large cities sent out a folder on the subject of delinquent children. It began with a heart-rending picture of a pinched little face looking down from a window on a slum back yard full of tin cans and refuse. It went on to inquire in stirring terms what could be done for this underprivileged child. And it ended with the inevitable appeal for funds to build this, that, and the other which the child might enjoy—and to pay the copy-writer.

Nowhere in the folder was the suggestion that the child could get down there and help clean the refuse out of the back yard. Nowhere was it hinted that a friendly person with a little organized childpower could throw away those tin cans and get something planted, and that the operation would require not more than a day and perhaps fifty cents' worth of seeds. Everything was going to be poured on that child, in terms of thousands of dollars—but no one breathed the thought that the child could do something for himself!

But children like gardens, and they like to do things for their own homes if they are encouraged to. Why take a child away from filthy quarters to a de luxe community center, play with him for an hour or two, and send him back to the filth again? This is not to say that the centers are wrong or that they are not helpful, but merely to suggest that charity, like everything else, ought to begin in the home, and that until the child realizes that he can do something about his situation there, any program for his care lacks balance.

The public schools are beginning to get this slant on the problem. A lecturer once went to speak at a public high school and was introduced as being about to talk on Art. The audience was composed of girls said to be interested in that supposedly abstruse subject. He looked

around at the sea of fifteen hundred unexpectant faces preparing to be bored, and it made him mad.

"I feel like Frank Sinatra," he said, "only I can't sing." That broke the ice, and he proceeded to dish out some home truths.

"How many of you saw some litter in the streets around your houses as you came out this morning?" A lot of hands went up. "How many of you did something about it?" No hands. "How many of



. . . litter in the streets . . .

you did some work around the house before you left?" No hands. "How many of you have made something which can be used in your homes?" No hands. "How many of you can make your own clothes?" No hands. "How many of you know how to cook?" No hands.

"I can see that you spend a lot of time on your clothes. How many of you realize that it is your faces and not your clothes that are im-

portant, and the best clothes are those that are least noticeable apart from you?" No hands. "How many of you want a man?" "YEA-A-A!" Unanimous. "Well, don't you realize that a knowledge of these simple things is the way to get one?"

"What is the use of talking to you about Art when you don't know the fundamentals of it? Art is not something way up in the air. It is not peering through museums and poring over chronologies of long-dead names. Art is ever-present and close to us all. It is making something we need as well as we can make it. It is imposing order on our surroundings and on our behavior. It is arranging the details of our daily life so that they make a beautiful pattern. Art is living itself."

All credit should be given to the public schools which have made a start in this direction. A few of them, realizing that art begins at home, have established what they have called a laboratory of house furnishing. In other words, they have devoted a large room to furniture and equipment of all sorts suitable for home use. The children are free to copy anything included in this room. They may rearrange the furniture from time to time and try out the advantages of different placements. On certain evenings, the parents are invited to come and experiment, along with the children. The children learn to make curtains and other necessities.

In combination with this laboratory, the arts and crafts departments in these schools devote themselves to having the children make really useful articles which they can take home with them. They make bookcases and dinner plates. They make ash trays. If they are doing woodwork, they make rolling pins or bowls rather than jig-saw wall brackets. They do not devote their valuable time to finger painting or making birdcages (as has been done in other places), and they are not led to believe that every stumbling effort

at modeling is a work of genius—to the encouragement of a vast amount of mediocrity.

The director of art in one of our larger cities has been working along these lines and made some practical suggestions which she permits us to quote:

“Shop classes in the 7th, 8th, and 9th years could make furniture symbols which could be used by younger pupils for preliminary study of color and functional grouping. Whatever is made by shop classes should be useful, well designed, and well constructed.

“Children can be made more conscious of good proportion, texture, color, and functional design by having them bring in from home the most appropriate and pleasing *inexpensive* objects. It may be a kitchen bowl, a utensil with a plastic handle, an ash tray, a dish or cup, a table mat, or a piece of fabric. The experience will make young people more aware of the simple beauty in their surroundings and more discriminating in regard to them. If each child were asked to arrange the item for display, that would give additional experience in combining items. Later, when inexpensive articles of good design are more easily available in 5 and 10 cent stores, children and high school students can be urged to select the best from among these.

“All children should have frequent opportunities to see and make choices among items of home furnishing. For this purpose, each school, junior high, high school, and vocational high school, should have a collection of fabrics which is added to each year. Children can feel and drape the cloth to see the effect, judge quality, and decide appropriate uses for the various types of fabrics.



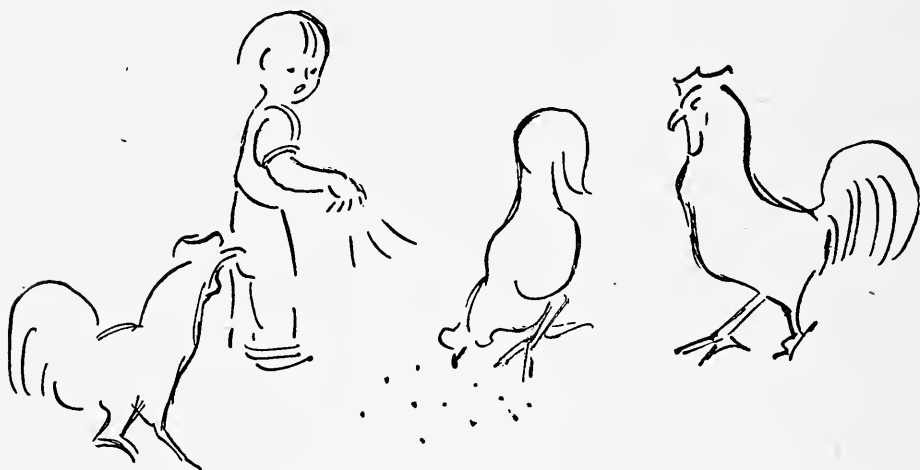
“Arrangements could be made with good local furniture or department stores to allow groups of young people to come in at regular intervals to make a tour of the department, then arrange and rearrange furniture groupings under the guidance of the department expert. This would give them practical experience in judging values as well as appearance. Opportunity to set up different arrangements would exercise judgment and develop design and color sense.”

It is amazing what children can turn out with a little of the right direction. They are really practical people and eager to enter the adult world if they can be shown the right way to do it. They do not care for being kept in this limbo of daydreaming to which so much education condemns them. They like to feel alive, active, and in touch with the work and the world around them. And when they make something, they like to see it used.

A children's room in an exhibition house was once decorated entirely with objects which the children had made in the public schools. The mantelpiece held a zoo of amusing clay animals. Under the windows was pasted a frieze of autumn leaves which some child had painted. Children made the pictures on the walls. One of them drew particular comment—a most uninhibited giraffe in yellow and brown, with pink eyes against a sky-blue ground.

If you have a talented child, the way to be encouraging is to let him see some of his products actually in family use. But, above all things, never never let anyone think that talent has any value unless it is backed up by a lot of hard work. Work and plenty of it is the base under any sort of accomplishment, so why not give your children the benefit of learning this early in life?

The happiest children in the world are usually farm children, and they are so for two reasons. In the first place, there is a lot going on around them easy to understand and interesting to watch. In the second place, they usually start in with little chores from the time they are very young, so that they feel themselves a responsible and integrated part of the family life.



*The happiest children . . .*

If children respect their home and take their share in it, it will be a happy place. It ought not to be necessary to have everything in it child-proof. Parents don't want muddy feet on their big chairs, but they will try to co-operate by providing small chairs instead. And children in turn will remember that a little touch of manners doesn't hurt anybody. Grown-ups have to live too, you know.

## THE HOTEL SITUATION

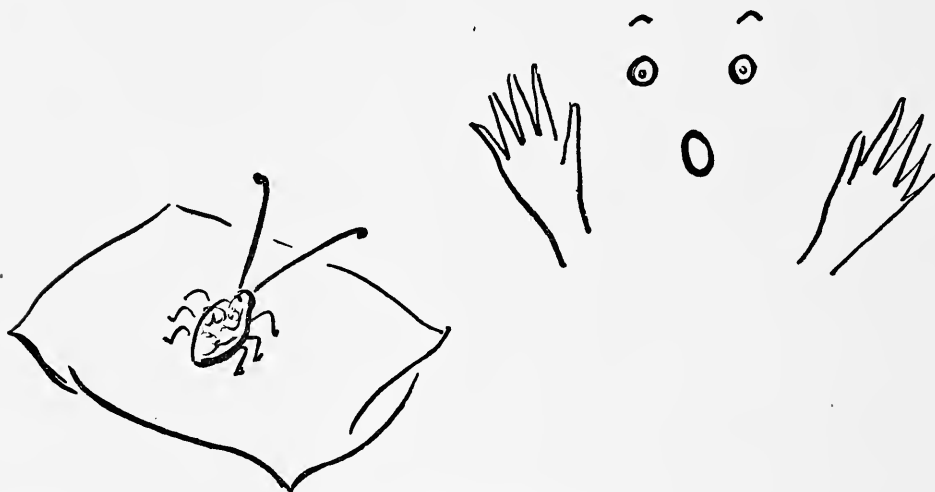
**A**MERICANS LOVE their homes, but will not stay in them. It is too late now to imagine what our civilization would have been without the invention of the wheel, to say nothing of the cylinder. Therefore, to us more than to most peoples, there is real importance in that "home away from home," the hotel. Haven't you sometimes had a dream of getting Aunt Esther to stay with the children while you and the spouse climbed in the car (a new one, of course) and wandered off on a short trip, completely without responsibility and without specific destination? You would have a delicious simple dinner of food direct from the source to you. You would sleep like a couple of kittens while the wind sang in the pines, and breakfast on your balcony overlooking a waterfall. Have you ever done this? Of course not; because the place does not exist.

We have a lot of hotels, and big ones at that. There are the pseudo-Spanish or baronial palaces along the coasts; the ramshackle white elephants erected near any mineral spring; the neat and boxlike commercial jobs in every minor city or town. All the way from the Ritz to the tourist camp, these structures are crammed with people. Only in this country does the "summer resort" so universally answer the problem of what to do with the entire family for the month of August. It has been suggested that the best solution for the present overcrowding is to find out where all these people came from, and go *there*. It is safe to assume that there is hardly an adult in the

United States, no matter how humble, who at one time or another has not spent a night in some sort of hotel.

Yet upon how many of these occasions have you been really comfortable? How many times have you found your surroundings home-like and restful? The chances are that it will not take you long to count them up.

Nevertheless, the hotels are really trying. They are full of modern gadgets, from slots for old razor blades to plugged-in radios. They



. . . and wave his feelers at you.

are usually clean. Rarely in this country does the *blatta orientalis* or *germanica* sit on your pillow and wave his feelers at you. The hotels advertise widely. Service with a smile, they say, clean linen every day, Prettysleep mattresses—not to mention hot and cold running bellboys. But for all this cleanliness, efficiency, and synthetic charm, when you get there what do you find?

You arrive tired, check in, take a room, and as quickly as possible follow your one suitcase up to your temporary home. You want to

relax, to be comfortable, to spread out your papers on a desk and do a little work before dinner. You flick on the light, and from the ceiling a bulb glares at you, bare or covered by a few glass beads or a bowl of frosted glass etched with grapes. This charming contrivance serves to illuminate a mahogany (finish) five-drawer chiffonier on which is a thick glass tray, a heavy water pitcher, and an unbreakable water glass turned upside down. All of this will probably rest on a worn-out square of white cotton cloth woven with damask design to make it look rich. The chiffonier is squeezed into a small space between the closet door and the bathroom, and you are thankful to be no fatter as you detour around. Above it, and askew, will hang a bad reproduction of an etching of Cologne cathedral, or a "house rules" sign.

You are somewhat repelled and look hastily at the other side of the room. There stands a large, dark, and menacing bureau to match the chiffonier, with a sheet of glass on top protecting a printed menu of "room service." This will have five drawers and a mirror with light attached to the top for maximum glare and unbecomingness, and in the top drawer will be the only book in the room, placed there by the Gideon Society, who alone has recognized the fact that you are going to have some time on your hands and may wonder what to do with it.

A chair covered with dark, dirty frieze dares you to try its hard and prickly surface. Some shrunken and crooked casement curtains hang at the windows, flanked by imitation damask or cheap print, usually six inches from the floor and surmounted by a valance which has never been washed because it is too hard to take down. Let us try to forget the bed and the bedspread. The bedside table was obviously made for a race of midgets. There is not room enough on it for a watch.

You open your suitcase and ponder which one of the ten deep drawers so thoughtfully provided will be best to hold your four shirts, six socks, and eight handkerchiefs. You open your briefcase and discover that you cannot possibly find room for your papers on the miniature desk where a lamp and the telephone are already competing for such small space as is available. You peer about at the walls, sickly green or cream, at the stark white ceiling now gray with dust, at the monstrous floor lamp which leers at you from one corner. You do not sit down and read your Gideon Bible. You order the local paper, look up what is playing at the movies, and even if it is a grade B picture which you saw in Glens Falls last summer, out you go.

Dreary, depressing, unfriendly, badly co-ordinated, badly conceived, ostentatious, overbearing, fake grandeur it is. Everything seems to have been ordered sight unseen, price of merchandise the only criterion.

United Hotel Men, arise! Your establishments do not have to be this way!

It takes surprisingly little to transform dreariness into comfort. Paint and a carpenter's hammer and chisel will work wonders. An ax is really not necessary.

The basic problem is very much simpler than that of a private house, because there is here no individuality to be expressed. The hotel man should strive for an inviting and comfortable room, fresh-looking and cheerful, and neutral enough to take on a guest's personality. The first rule should be not to overfurnish, but to leave enough uncluttered spaces for the visitor's own belongings. Much as recipes for charm are to be dreaded in dwelling houses, a hotel is so impersonal that a few definite suggestions can safely be given, and here they are:

1) Get to work with paint. Wall colors need not be dull or garish, but should be simply clean and fresh. For example: a cool gray, a very pale yellow, a very light gray-green. It will be a great saving of time and money to put the same color all over the walls, woodwork, and ceiling, and it will seem to double the size of a small hotel room.

2) Furnish the rooms so that they are like sitting rooms in the daytime. Use beds which can be made up like couches, and put on them only spreads of a simple weave which is noncrushable so that the guest can lie down if he wants to. Arrange the lamps so that one or two can read.

3) In the transient room you will not need more than three drawers. The top of your chest of drawers could be prolonged by a shelf along the wall to give a large desk space. An adjustable spot-light lamp on this surface will throw light either on papers or on a face which is being redone.

4) Don't have cloth on the arms of the chairs, and they will wear twice as long. Broad wooden arms are just as comfortable, make the chair light to move, and stay clean.

5) Let the luggage rack be a bench which can also be used to sit on.

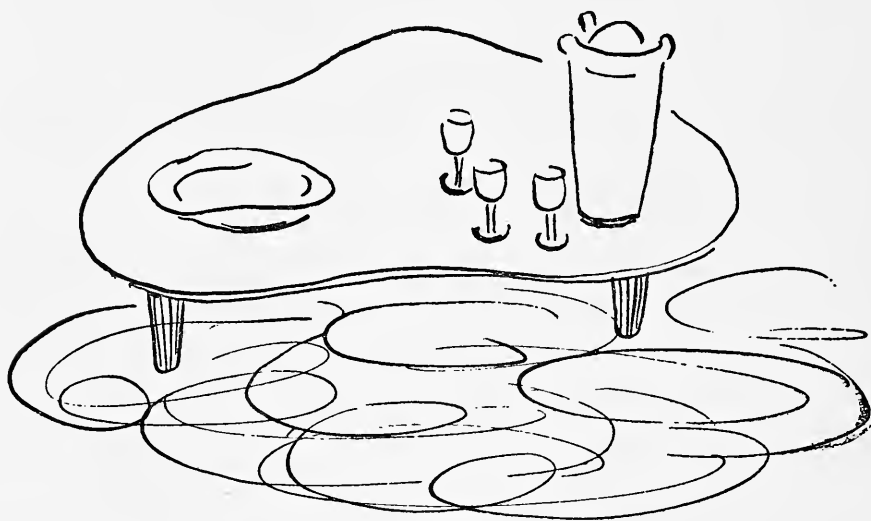
6) Put in the room a low table large enough to hold a breakfast tray for two, or cocktails for many.

7) Curtain the windows in one pleasant material put up on either side of the window but not over it. This will not keep out the light. Venetian blinds in addition can be useful for regulating the light and for privacy.

8) Don't bother about pictures. Let the guest look at a plain, pleasing color, or out of the window.

9) Have your color in a few small bright spots, all chosen to blend, so that the most zombie-like chambermaid cannot arrange them to clash. Buy all of your bedspreads, curtains, and upholsteries in the same spirit, so that what goes in one room will go in all.

Not one step in the above is either difficult or expensive, yet it can be guaranteed that if this advice is followed a good effect will certainly be achieved. If the hotel man is appalled at the possible



*. . . a low table large enough . . .*

cost of a sweeping change, he may take heart. It is not necessary to buy new furniture throughout in order to modernize. With a little treatment, most of the old furniture can be made to do.

First, wash off all the varnish and stain with paint remover, and let the honest wood speak for itself. If the wood is actually too cheap for this treatment, spray the piece with beige or white paint. The edgings and carvings will then have a pleasant molded effect. Cut



down the footboards of the beds to make them less bulky and to give more room. Cut the feet off the bureau and chiffonier and bring them down to the floor with a top at desk level, and extend your writing shelf from that. Both of them are not really necessary, and you will have more space if you use only one. The guest does not need more than three drawers in which to forget his toothbrush and pajamas. Incidentally, this same type of treatment can revamp old pieces of furniture which are needed in a private home.

A seaside hotel in Florida was recently given back to itself after three years with the army and navy. Naturally, while being hostess to a regiment, the old girl had suffered a good deal of wear and tear. The owners did not know what ought to be done, but summed it up in the simple word: Everything.

The restoration started by painting all the guest rooms, walls, ceilings, and woodwork a gray so soft that it was almost an oyster-white. Thousands of dollars were saved by the use of a single color selected because it was suitable for a semi-tropical climate. In the corridors more warmth was needed to keep them from being institution-like and depressing. The walls were painted dusty pink, with cocoa-brown carpet on the floor. Incidentally, if a corridor is too long and too narrow, as most are, the proportions can be changed materially by the proper use of color. An end wall painted in "advancing" colors, such as shades of yellow and red, will come toward you, while side walls painted soft grays or blues will recede and make the halls look wider.

All of the old furniture was redone in white or beige as described above, and a minimum of new pieces was ordered. In selecting these, only a few designs were chosen, so that hundreds of one thing could be ordered directly from the factory, and a great deal of money saved. The same principle was applied to the choice of bed-

spreads by picking out one good design in sand-color and non-crushable weave. All of these things blended so easily that they could be used interchangeably in any room, thus leaving no possibility of housemaids' or housekeepers' errors.

Outside at the beach and through the grounds, a similar continuity of color prevailed. All the awnings were plain white instead of striped or tinted, and ship-laced flat to the tubes which held them up. These were painted a bright yellow. The porch and beach furniture was also white. The planting was limited to large tubs of coramundon trees standing on the terraces, studded with bright orange fruit which looked tempting but was sufficiently sour to discourage nibbling. No flowers were used except the native hibiscus, flame-vine, and bougainvillia which rioted over the walls here and there. Against this background of white and green, the bright green of the grass, the dark glossy green of the leaves with the small accents of yellow, the costumes and pillows of the bathers were like a kaleidoscope, all the more brilliant because there was nothing clashing or distracting.

At this point, the hotel owners were heard to murmur plaintively that they were not getting enough color. That, after all, this was not a hospital, it was a hotel, rooms ought to be lively, and not so much like tinted plaster bathrooms. But color soon arrived in the minor accessories.

The entire concrete floor of each room was covered with woolen carpet, some the crisp pink of a little girl's hair ribbon, some light blue, some a green almost the shade of the water in the bay outside. Straight curtains in plain colors and washable but thick fabric were hung on either side of the windows from ceiling to floor. On the south side of the building where the sun was fierce, these curtains were off-white, since that would always look fresh and cool and

could not fade. On the north side of the building, however, curtains in sunshine-yellow and warm pink were selected to give cheerfulness and warmth. On the east and west, the rooms alternated all three shades and also a water-green like that in the carpet. With the addition of an occasional cushion or chair upholstered also in one of these colors, the rooms were sufficiently gay.

The managers had planned to order, at considerable expense, hundreds of water colors of tropical scenes to hang on the walls. They were persuaded not to have any pictures at all; the views from the windows would far surpass anything which could be hung. The windows themselves thus became living and colorful pictures, and the walls were left restfully bare.

In the public rooms a similar inviting harmony prevailed. They were not supposed to be unusual or startling, or to play on some particular theme. They were supposed to be places where people would like to sit down and remain. Some effort was made to have rooms adapted to different tastes. For instance, there were bridge tables in one, with spotlighting on the tables, and very little other seating in the room. Another salon was decorated for quiet people, with subdued lighting, comfortable chairs. The room for dancing was downstairs so that the noise would not distract the rest of the guests, and it was as bright and gay as possible.

When the hotel opened, it was proved that these ideas had validity, for people naturally gravitated to the different rooms for different purposes, and quite automatically used them as intended. An effect had been achieved by simple means and without extravagance. It was not whimsical, it was not bizarre, but fresh, restful, and inviting—far more inviting than dozens of cheery greeting cards in individual rooms, or free copies of the local paper.

It must be remembered that this was a southern beach hotel.

Everything was designed toward helping it carry out its own function. These ideas would not be adapted to a Gothic castle in the mountains, or to a Swiss chalet by a lake.

Consequently, if you are doing over a hotel which has a very definite type of architecture—red brick colonial, or neo-classic, or whatever it may be—you will achieve the best unity of result if you stick more or less closely to that period in the interior design as well. In spite of all that has been said about reproductions, this is one place where they serve a purpose. This is the place to use that Williamsburg blue, and other colors suited to other epochs. It would take too long to list all the possible errors and all the ways of avoiding them. This paragraph should close simply with a severe word of caution. Do not try to be modern if your building is plainly in the style of another era.

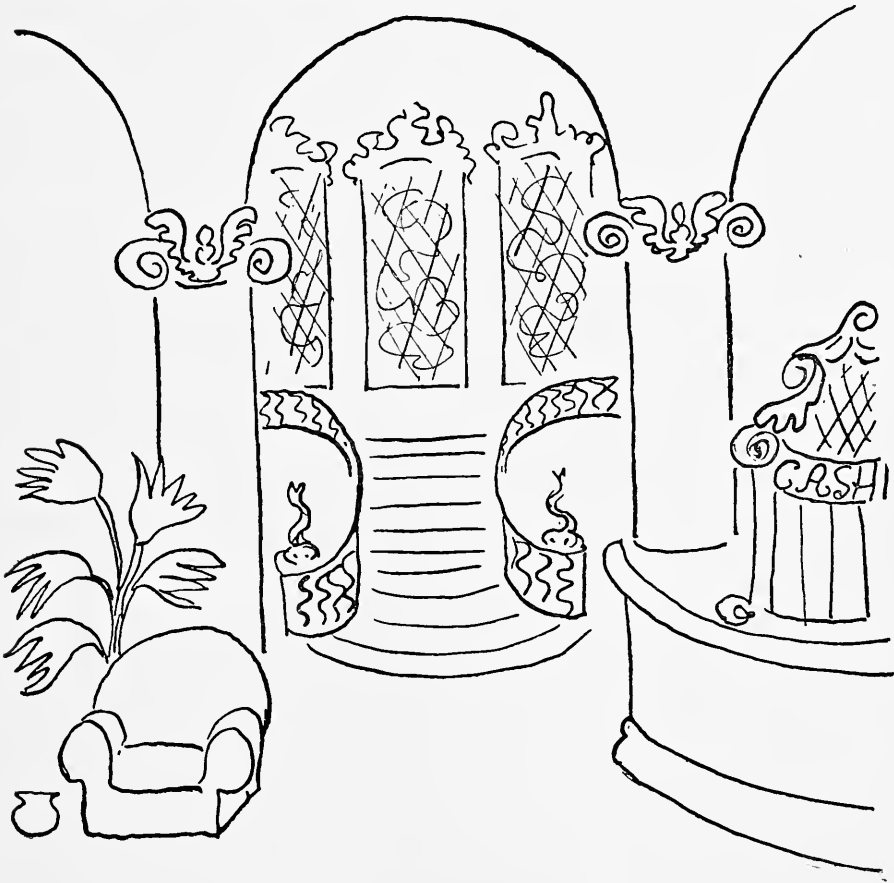
Another temptation to digress has suddenly come to me, and I am too weak to resist it. While discussing the importance of maintaining a unity between the appearance of the building and its interior furnishings, may we pause to utter a prayer that ship interiors of the future should remind us of the sea upon whose gentle breast we temporarily rest rather than of the satin-filled, landlubber hostelrys on lower Plush Avenue? The owner of an ocean liner the other day actually rejected a fabric with a marine design because, as he put it, he was “trying to get away from the sea”!

This is indeed the Ultima Thule of nonsense. The mind of man has devised nothing more beautiful than a noble ship, and because the sea which she serves is exacting and terrible, a ship must be strictly functional in every part of her design. And now we are to have ships upon which we can forget the sea, forget the clean immensity which gives them life and purpose. And we are to imagine ourselves back on shore in the midst of all the commercialism, the

pretentiousness, and the pretenses from which we might have hoped, at least momentarily, to escape.

Let us hurry away from such an enormity of error, back to our landlocked hotels which have no choice except to be fixed on the earth and to cope with it as best they can.

The correct treatment of public rooms in hotels is a study in itself. All too often, no expense is spared in their decoration for the single purpose of startling and outdoing every other hotel in town. Yet there is little use in having the richest lobby, lavish in gold curli-



... the richest lobby ...

cues, pink marble, and stained glass, if no one wants to sit in it. And it is worse than useless to provide the guest with a fine lobby and a bleak, cheerless room upstairs, the space for which he is actually paying. The public rooms of a hotel should have a meaning, they should have some relation to their situation and the purpose they are expected to serve. They should not be used as an opportunity for getting some notion and riding it to death.

There is a midwestern hotel which has a Celtic Room. Every chandelier is a vastly enlarged copy in tin of a primitive crown studded with stained glass jewels. Every beam is carved and painted with inscriptions in what may very well be Erse, for who can tell? The walls are covered with busy murals of knights in armor, and not a pleasant disposition among the lot of them. Every lamp on every table has a tin shade pricked in designs suitable to a helmet or a corselet. If you do not know what is the matter with this, this book has been written in vain. What have Celtic knights, and imitation Celtic knights at that, to do with our prairies?

On the other hand, a hotel on the west coast has one of the most beautiful dining rooms in the world. It is on the roof, it is circular, and the walls are made of glass. The room looks out over a dramatic and exciting city, down upon a famous and spectacular harbor. The interior is simple, and the colors muted. Nothing is emphasized save the magnificence of the view and the silent billows of fog rolling in from the Pacific.

This is superb, but it would be quite another thing if it were copied in Florida where the guests would fry as if under a burning-glass while they stared out over sand beaten by unremitting sun. In New York, however, something of the sort would be an interesting experiment. There are still too few rooms in New York which fully

use the outlook over the towers and pinnacles, the spangled lights, the rivers of a city more fabulous than Babylon.

The fact is that in hotels, as in private houses, everything should have a reason, a purpose to fulfill. It is not necessary to be grim in order to be practical. Cheerful things will wear as long as dingy ones, if they are carefully selected. It is certain that the public will appreciate good design when they have a chance to see it. The hotels in America can better themselves, and they can have an immense influence on the public taste, if they will accept their responsibility.

## REASON, EMOTION, AND DISCRIMINATION

**P**ERHAPS BY THIS TIME the persevering reader feels saturated with theory and ready for something more concrete. This is dangerous ground, because there is no formula for beauty, no recipe for charm. Therefore, by all means, test any of the following practical suggestions by the three indispensables which must assist you in the assembling of your home: Reason, Emotion, Discrimination.

Reason should tell you to plan what is suitable to your budget, to the locality, and to your needs. Emotion should guide you toward what you really love and enjoy, and should make your home warm, glowing, and individual. Discrimination should keep you from filling up your rooms with useless articles, tasteless imitations, and selections which you will regret.

The balance between reason and emotion should be finely kept. Use too much reason, and you will get a frigid and cautious interior like a set piece in a store. Use too much emotion, of the "isn't it *darling*, I have *got* to have it" variety, and you will flutter into clutter, a pain to your spouse, yourself, and the shop to which you return half of what you so gleefully grabbed.

But these are ingredients in the original mixture of a personality, and stirred in with a bigger spoon than we can handle. So here goes for a *mélange* of advice on less important items. Take it or leave it.



(1)

When you start furnishing your home, you are bound to think first about *money*. Since this must be, here is one way to get the most out of it. Spend most on the points which will get the greatest wear and tear.

Buy a good stair carpet before you buy a rug for your bedroom. Cover the hall floor before you cover the guest room. Only good quality will stand up at these two points, so do not waste your money on makeshifts and substitutes. Never economize on mattresses and springs for your bed. A first-class mattress and a box spring on legs is a far better investment than a bedstead. You can afford to wait for the bedstead, but there is not much use in old spools or carved swans if you cannot sleep when you turn out the light. Remember that a man spends all his life either in his bed or in his shoes. A big sofa and two easy chairs in the living room are also strategic points. If they are of good quality, they will last for twenty years or more. If bad, you will wish them gone in one. There is one basic rule which will keep you out of a lot of trouble. Save by doing without rather than by buying poor quality.

(2)

You may have a good deal of trouble deciding upon your *wall-paper*. It is very hard to advise what to do about this. But let's try, if wallpaper is what you have to have. It must be admitted that in many old houses wallpapers are essential to cover cracks and blemishes in the plaster.

In the first place, don't go in for fakes or whimsies. If you are interested in South America, use South American colors, not a paper

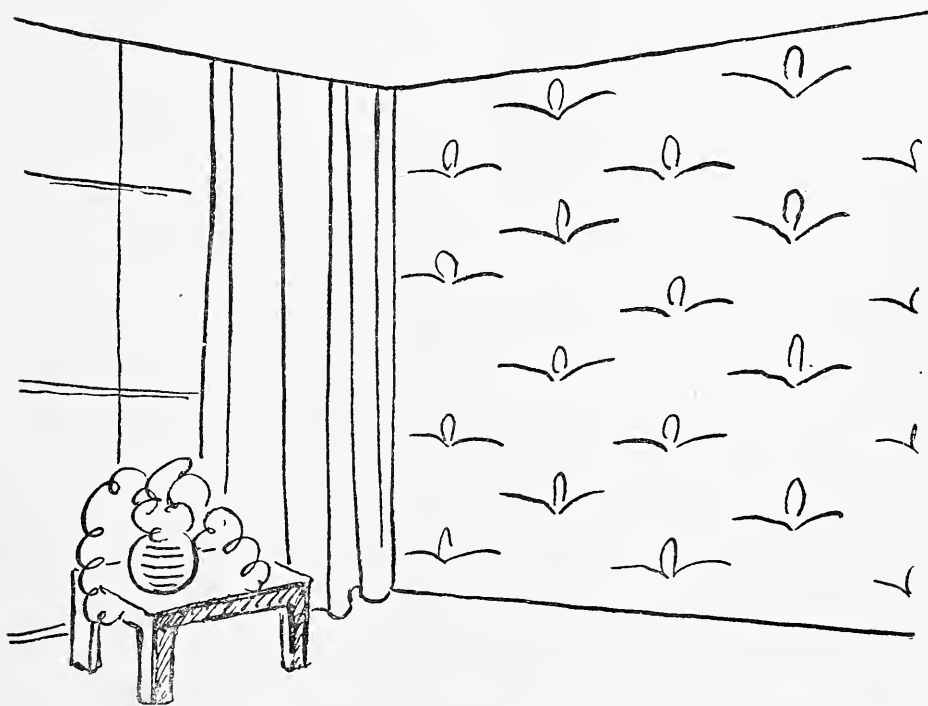
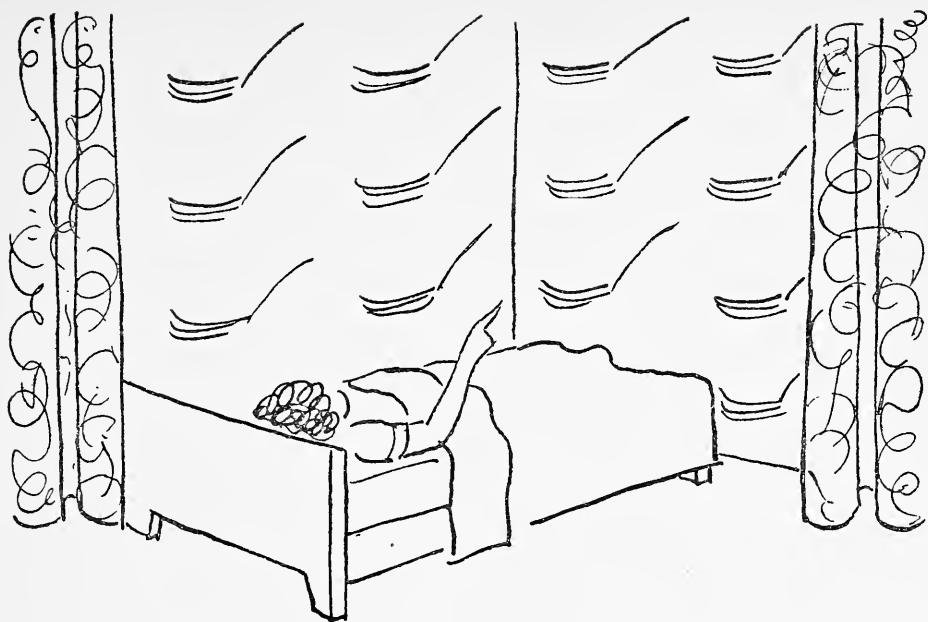
in which a theoretical peak of the Andes sticks out of a hypothetical lake. If you love horses and hunting, get some hunting prints, but not a wallpaper in which the same badly drawn mount leaps the same fence on every two feet of it. You will soon begin to fault him and get very tired of waiting for the inevitable spill when those forelegs land crossed.

Secondly, a good design should stop itself. If it goes to the right, it should correspondingly go to the left. The sketch will show more clearly than words what is meant by this.

Have you ever been ill in a room with a bad wallpaper? You can go mad adding, subtracting, and counting spots, or making faces out of violent patterns. In a bedroom, the wallpaper should recede. It should not hit you in the eye when you wake up, at the moment when you have the least resistance.

It is important to consider the scale of your room, and choose a design which is in proportion to it. In a large space, a tiny pattern becomes monotonous. For example, a diamond motif with half an inch between the points will, in a large room, fade into the wall so that it is merely a texture. A three inch pattern would be definite enough to be annoying, but an eighteen inch diamond would probably be effective.

Amusing wallpaper is not out of place in small rooms which are not occupied for very long at a time, such as flower rooms, gun rooms, dressing rooms, or lavatories. There you can really let yourself go with those irresistible little white horses, those quaint old Chinamen, those peacocks or monkeys. But bedrooms should be restful, living rooms neutral, and halls inconspicuous. Kitchens can well afford to be colorful, bright, and gay; but why little vegetables all over the wall? Aren't there enough of them on the table?



(top) . . . bad wallpaper . . . (bottom) . . . balanced wallpaper . . .

To sum up: approach wallpaper cautiously. If you are unable to find really good designs, stick to quiet colors. If the design is really good, you can be more daring.

## (3)

Then there are *floor coverings*.

Nothing in the world is better than fine old orientals, hand-made, with traditional and significant designs, and rich colors made by vegetable dyes. But there are not enough of these to go around, and, besides, most people cannot afford them.

Patterned rugs are useful in the country because they do not show the mud and dirt. Your dear old dog, your children, and even your heavy-footed husband will be more welcome in the living room if you cannot immediately see what they are doing to the floor. On the other hand, in a city apartment, where feet are automatically wiped by covering a good deal of distance before they get to you, a plain rug may give a more restful feeling. But never put a plain rug in the dining room, unless you want to be in there after every meal with the vacuum cleaner, or unless you have an obliging puppy who will take care of crumbs. Besides, in no time flat, a plain rug will have a track on it from the busy feet that go around the table.

Why should there be a vogue for white rugs in cities? It must have been promoted by a dry-cleaners' association. If you must have a white rug, at least put it well inside your house where it does not get the first impact from the city streets.

The fashion for carved rugs is another of life's mysteries. Much money and trouble go into laying a smooth floor. Then upon it is laid a carpet like a plowed field, full of hills and valleys, a relief map and an ankle trap. This makes no sense. The feeling of a broken

surface should be given by the design, not by a series of little ridges and lumps.

The movement of the design should be stopped in a rug, just as it is in a wallpaper. In general, the pattern should be fairly inconspicuous, so that the furniture placed on it can be seen.

Some new materials are coming into use which may revolutionize the whole theory of floor covering. Very soon we need no longer think of wool as the essential fiber in carpet manufacturing. Wool holds the dirt, it is heavy, it generates electricity, and, worst of all, it feeds the moths. Tests are now being made of new fibers composed of asbestos, nylon, soya beans, and cornstalks. These materials are proved to be resistant, easily dyed, packed, and shipped, and some are lighter in weight than wool. The factories are also experimenting with more commonplace weaves, and have produced some interesting combinations of cotton, jute, and linen in stripes. But, as yet, the field is hardly beginning to open. There is room for a tremendous amount of imagination, ingenuity, and designing talent to help us break away from the dead level of tradition. Manufacturers, please give us more and better rugs.

(4)

As to *draperies*, don't have any more than you can help. At a window they should either frame a beautiful view, or cut out a bad one. There is not much use in their just being fancy.

Curtains can complete the architecture of a room. If it is too long, it can be foreshortened by a curtain in contrast to the wall. If there is big furniture on one side, it may be balanced by a big curtain. If the room is too stark, use a patterned curtain. For quiet elegance, use plain curtains. In a big public room violent curtains are permissible. And, incidentally, when hanging a drapery behind a lec-

ture platform or a stage, have it neutral so that it floats into the wall, and not so bright that it becomes overpowering to the human figure in front of it.

Do not be afraid of using simple materials for draperies. Monk's cloth and cheesecloth have already been suggested as inexpensive and effective. Another material which is fresh, particularly in the country, and which is easily washed and handled, is ordinary sheeting.

So much for three classes of furnishing which the average householder usually spends a great deal of time in selecting. One basic thing should be remembered about all three of them. Wallpaper should stay on the walls, rugs should stay on the floors, draperies should stay at the windows. That is to say, they should not be so conspicuous that you are conscious of them the moment you enter the room, nor should they turn and bite you if you sit there for several hours.

There are a number of smaller and less fundamental items which add a great deal to a home, but which are not always used to the best advantage. It may be helpful to consider a few of these.

### (5)

Regarding *decorative articles*, too much cannot be said about the value of using and stimulating our living designers and craftsmen. A home containing only machine-made things will be as cold and lifeless as the machine itself. The humblest cottage and the richest house both need the warm, living quality of things made lovingly by hand. We need more little crafts shops everywhere, and they will increase and grow if they are supported. Write to the craftsmen whose names you find on the list in the appendix, starting perhaps with those nearest your locality, and ask them to send you pictures

or descriptions of what they are making. Such objects need only to be seen in order to be loved, because they have real beauty.

Books do not need to be confined to a single room in the house as though they were contagious. Only a very large house can afford a separate library. Plenty of books should be available in every room. A little wall shelf built over the bed will be convenient for the guest room. In the owners' room, a five foot shelf might hold the most current reading, a collection of cookbooks for reference in planning meals, some favorite magazines in a space wide enough for them. The children ought to have low bookshelves with a table beside them where the big picture books can be spread out. A wall of books in the living room is as warm and beautiful a decoration as can be found, and when properly lit is very gay and friendly.

(6)

Everyone likes *plants* in a house, but often large pots of flowers perch on tables where they seem to be fighting for space with the lamps. Instead of scattering your plants around haphazardly, to the detriment of your room's balance, try to assign them a structural space in it. It is not difficult to build an indoor garden several feet wide near some sunny window, with a foot or less of dirt in a tin container. The growing things can then be watered all at once, and their time of blooming can be scheduled so that there is always something to show. The local greenhouse man will be able to tell you what does best indoors in your climate, so do not hesitate to ask for his expert advice. If the indoor garden seems too elaborate an idea for a conservative spirit, an old-fashioned flower stand in front of a window will serve something of the same purpose. But mass your plants for effect, and they will delight everyone and give you the same pleasure all year round that you get from digging out-of-doors

in the summer. Between the pots and plants in the indoor garden, simple containers can be placed for cut branches which have been brought indoors for forcing, or an occasional cut flower for color and effect. One such garden was kept glowing through most of the winter with branches of forsythia brought in at two week intervals.

## ( 7 )

This modern age is particularly rich in *gadgets*. It is worth-while to keep up with the latest inventions, for some of them are really helpful. It is now possible to get removable sashes for windows. These can be lifted out for washing, so that it will never again be necessary to perch on a window sill. There are flat-bottomed non-skid bath tubs, and stout handrails to which the bather can cling. There are sliding doors for kitchen cabinets, which can never be left flapping to bang you in the eye. There are dining tables that fold up into the wall, leaving the floor free for dancing. There are twelve inch thick partitions with two-way openings to use between two rooms instead of the usual wall, which take almost nothing away from the size of the rooms, and yet provide storage space for all the unwieldy equipment of a home, from tennis rackets to phonograph records. The large, deep closet, where everything has to be either hung or stood on the floor, and where most of the contents will have to be pulled out in order to get at Mary's missing rubber which has gravitated to the back, will soon be as old-fashioned as the wardrobe, pride of our forebears. Organized storage is the watchword of today.

The ever-increasing range of built-in furniture is worth investigating. Almost everything can be built in these days, from the double-decker bed, which the children find so intriguing, to the radio. Kitchen cabinets have long been installed as an integral part



of the kitchen. Now storage space for clothing is being built into bedrooms or bathrooms, and the old-fashioned bureaus and chiffoniers are on the way out.

From the consideration of gadgets, one progresses almost irresistibly to some of the new ideas available for a house which is to be planned from the ground up. The kitchen-living room has already been considered, but there are a number of other multiple-purpose rooms, one of which may fit your own needs. There is the large game and hobby room, that seems to be just coming into its own. This can function as the real center of the house, where every member of the family should have a space assigned to pursue his or her interests. It should be furnished in a sturdy and inexpensive way, and, if possible, should give on a terrace or garden so that the out-of-doors can be almost a part of it. Dining arrangements can easily be incorporated into this room, and it can be supplemented by a small formal parlor or retiring room. Such a space should do more to hold a family together and keep the young at home than any number of moral lectures.

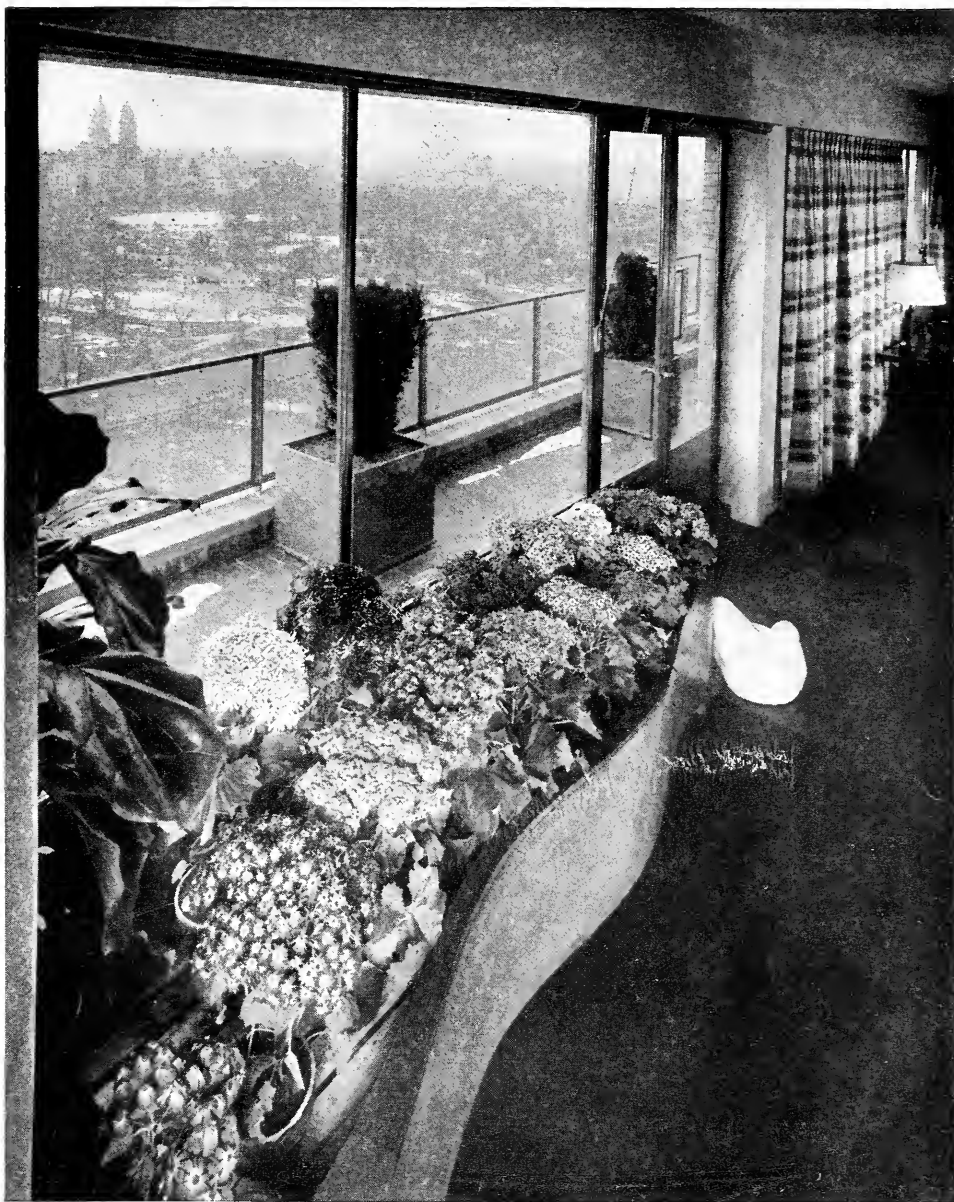
The attitude toward bedrooms is also changing. They are no longer to be considered merely as cells where one sleeps; or, if you feel that you wish your bedroom to function as that only, you can have a tiny one, and use the extra space which it would have consumed for a large bath-dressing room. Many couples feel that nothing promotes married harmony more effectively than separate dressing spaces. Where large bedrooms are preferred, there is no reason why they should not be made into bed-sitting rooms, perhaps with desks, sofas, and comfortable chairs. Such a sitting room gives the ultimate in privacy, and allows any member of a family to escape from the guests of the others—at times a welcome facility. Thomas Jefferson, one of our first modern architects, built his bed in an

alcove between two sitting rooms, and had it drawn up by pulleys into the ceiling by day, leaving the passage clear between them. This is probably a little too elaborate for most of us, but it shows what can be done by a mind uncluttered with tradition.

As for guest rooms, it is hard to see why any house in the world needs more than one of them. Should a number of guests arrive at once, they can surely be accommodated briefly on couches in rooms used for other purposes. This treatment may pay for itself in a single season by preventing Aunt Nellie from staying until Easter when she was invited for Thanksgiving dinner.

The newest idea for bathrooms is a three-way proposition which takes us back almost to the separate *cabinet* beloved of our grandparents. This arises from the increasing cost of installing a number of bathrooms, and the horror of the traffic jams to which the one-bath family is exposed. It is sometimes considered practical to install separate wash basins in each bedroom, built in like dressing tables, with a good broad Victorian shelf around the bowl. The general bathroom is then reduced to the tub in one compartment and the toilet in another.

Of course it is more inexpensive to concentrate the plumbing, and, if two or more bathrooms are required, to have them back against each other. Another expedient to reduce costs is to build, if possible, when your neighbors are building also, and to use the same contractor. He will be able to make much better terms on two or three jobs than he can do on one. A third economy rarely taken into consideration can be made by having the rooms of your house of standard carpet width—that is 9, 12, 15, or 18 feet. This will mean that they can be carpeted all over without the expense of cutting, piecing, and binding the sides, and will be a considerable saving in rooms where the floor is to be entirely covered.

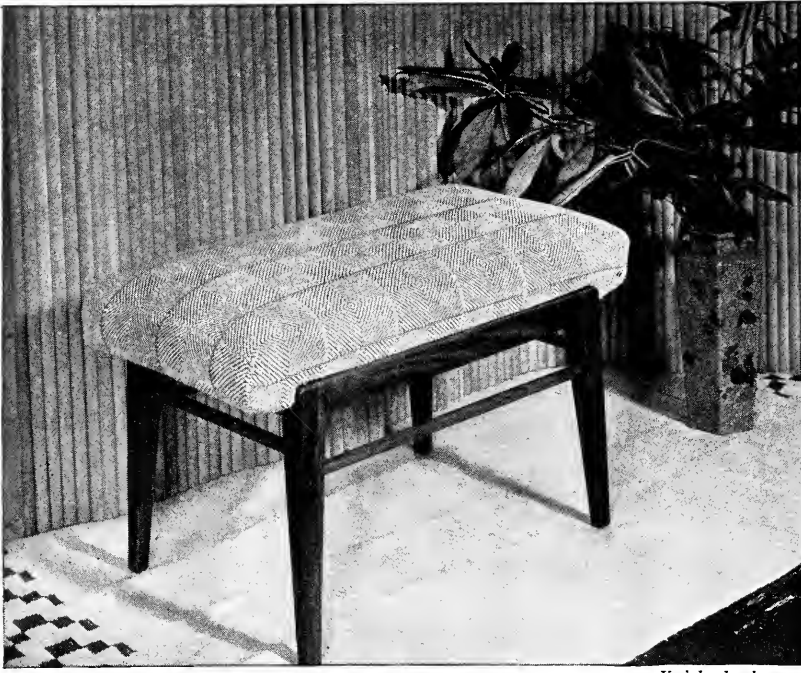


1.

*Costain*

### PHILIP GOODWIN APARTMENT, NEW YORK

Here advantage has been taken of a beautiful city view. Indoor planting protects flowers from the inevitable killing dirt and winds. Nor need the room be large, for the view takes the eye far beyond the narrow confines of a city home.



Bench is useful for piano or dressing table.

2.

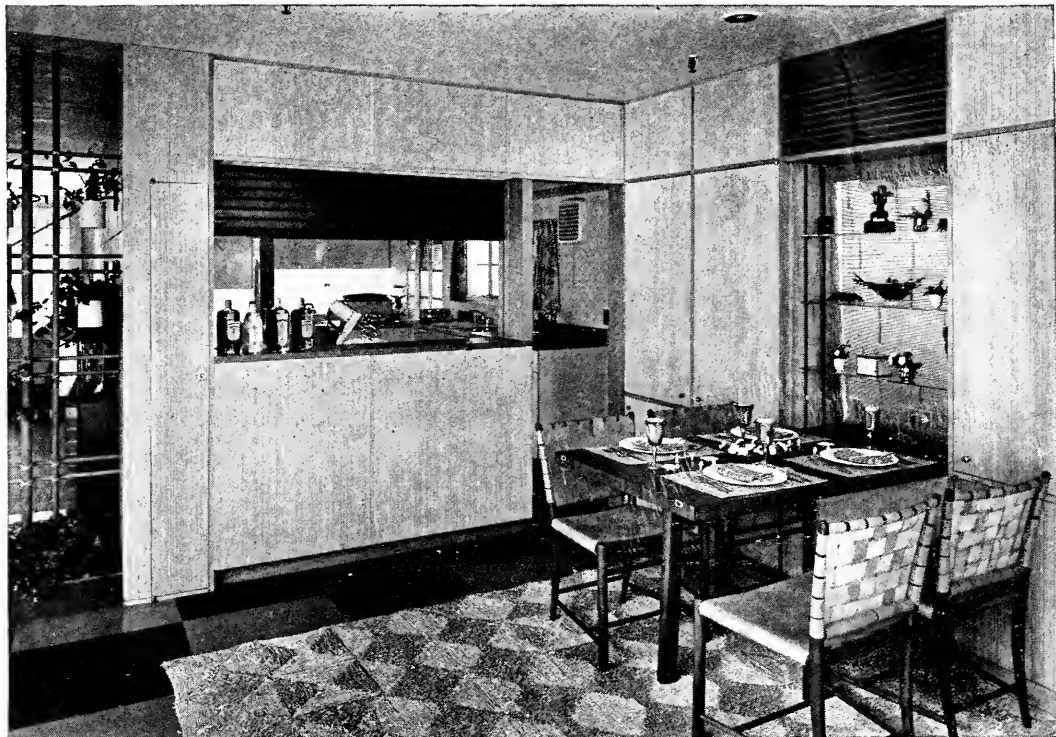
*Knickerbocker*



Cabinet table is useful at end of armless sofa or daybed.

3.

*Knickerbocker*



Gottsch

4.

#### COLLIER HOUSE OF IDEAS, RADIO CITY

Dining table has addition which can be hooked on or used elsewhere. By turning table up into window opening, the room is cleared for dancing. Counter at kitchen end can then be used for refreshments. Light for table is from spotlight sunk in ceiling overhead.

#### COLLIER HOUSE OF IDEAS, RADIO CITY

Corner table serves as headboard for two lounge beds; gives large surface.



Gottsch

5.





6.



7.



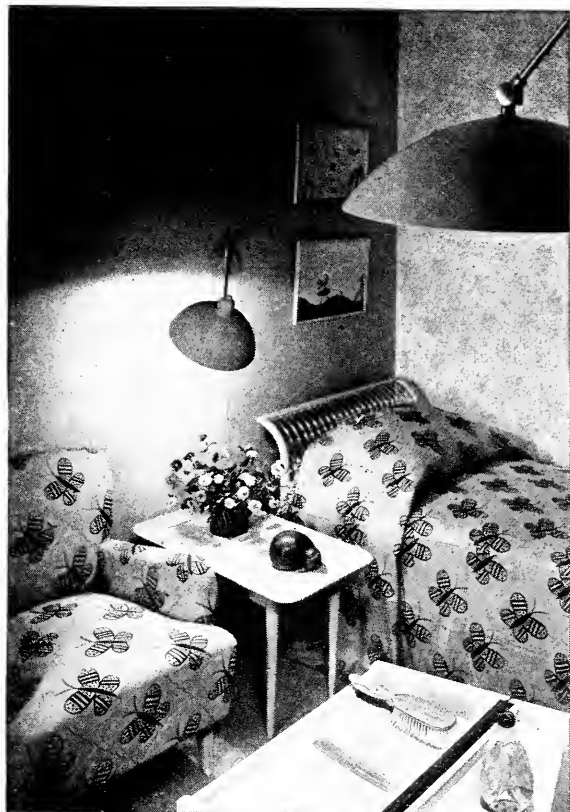
8.

Beautiful and simple accessories exhibited at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

COLLIER HOUSE OF IDEAS, RADIO CITY

The girl who occupies this room can direct the light where she wants it.

9.



*Gottscho*

LIVING ROOM, GEORGE WALLACE HOME

Fitchburg, Mass.

10.



*McCall's*



*Costain*

### CONGER GOODYEAR HOUSE, LONG ISLAND

View of rooms from terrace here a major part of the landscaping scheme. In this case, the fewer plants the better.





*Martin Bruehl*

This cozy spot would encourage any teen-ager to spend a lot of time at home.  
This would also make a good dormitory room.



*Costain*

13.

### CONGER GOODYEAR HOUSE, LONG ISLAND

Further proof that when a fine view exists, one should make use of it. The graceful form of the chairs eliminates any possible feeling of severity in this dining room.

*Costain*

### DINING ROOM

Use of figured fabric on chairs at head and foot of table indicates host and hostess. Anti-spot figured rug. Deep-toned walls with little on them direct the attention to dining for which the room exists.



*Museum of Modern Art*

### LIBRARY, VIIPURI LECTURE HALL

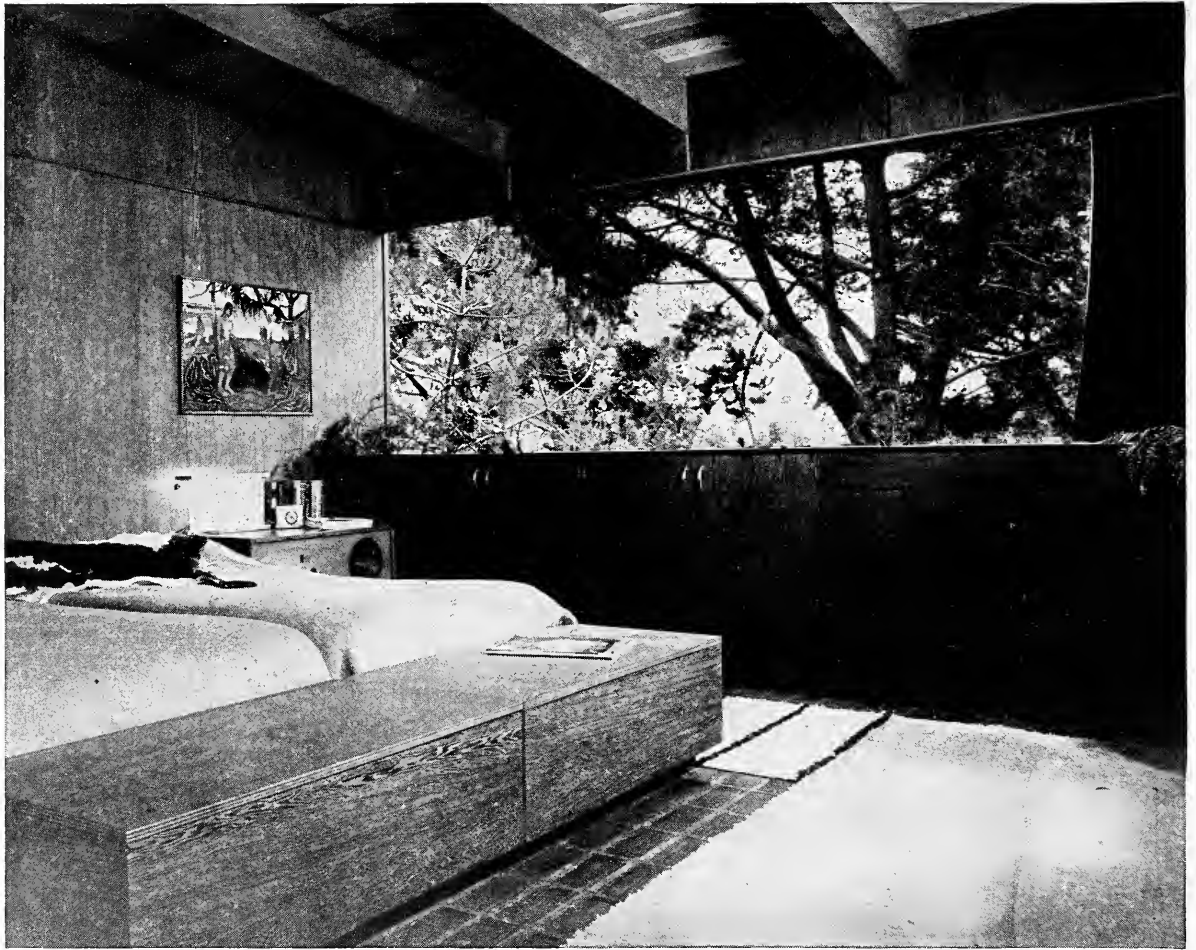
This hall, with its large window, gives full use of daylight. It divides into three rooms for smaller lecture groups. The view should inspire students.



PENTHOUSE, MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

One of the few places where people can sit and enjoy a view of New York. There should be many more such charming spots.

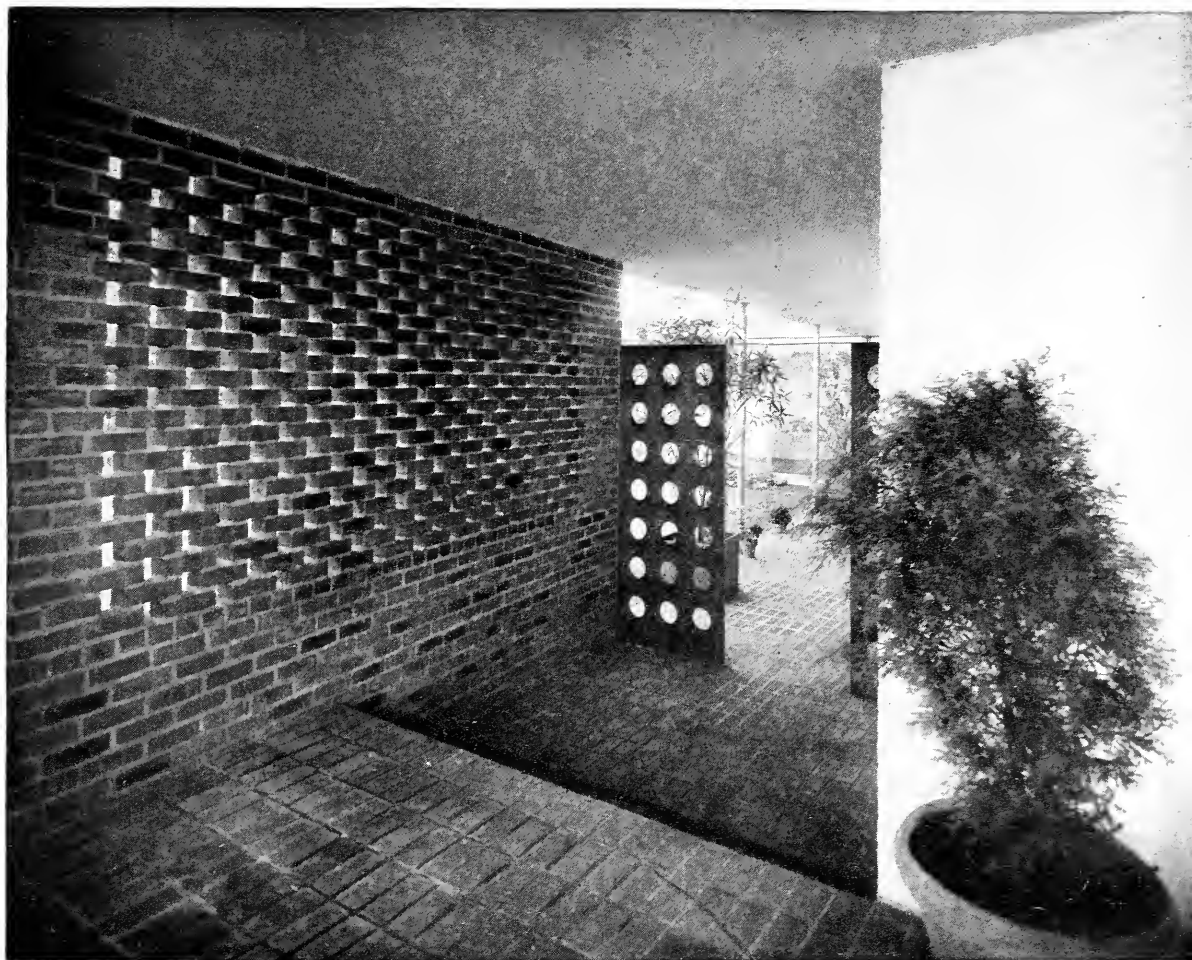




*Julius Shulman*

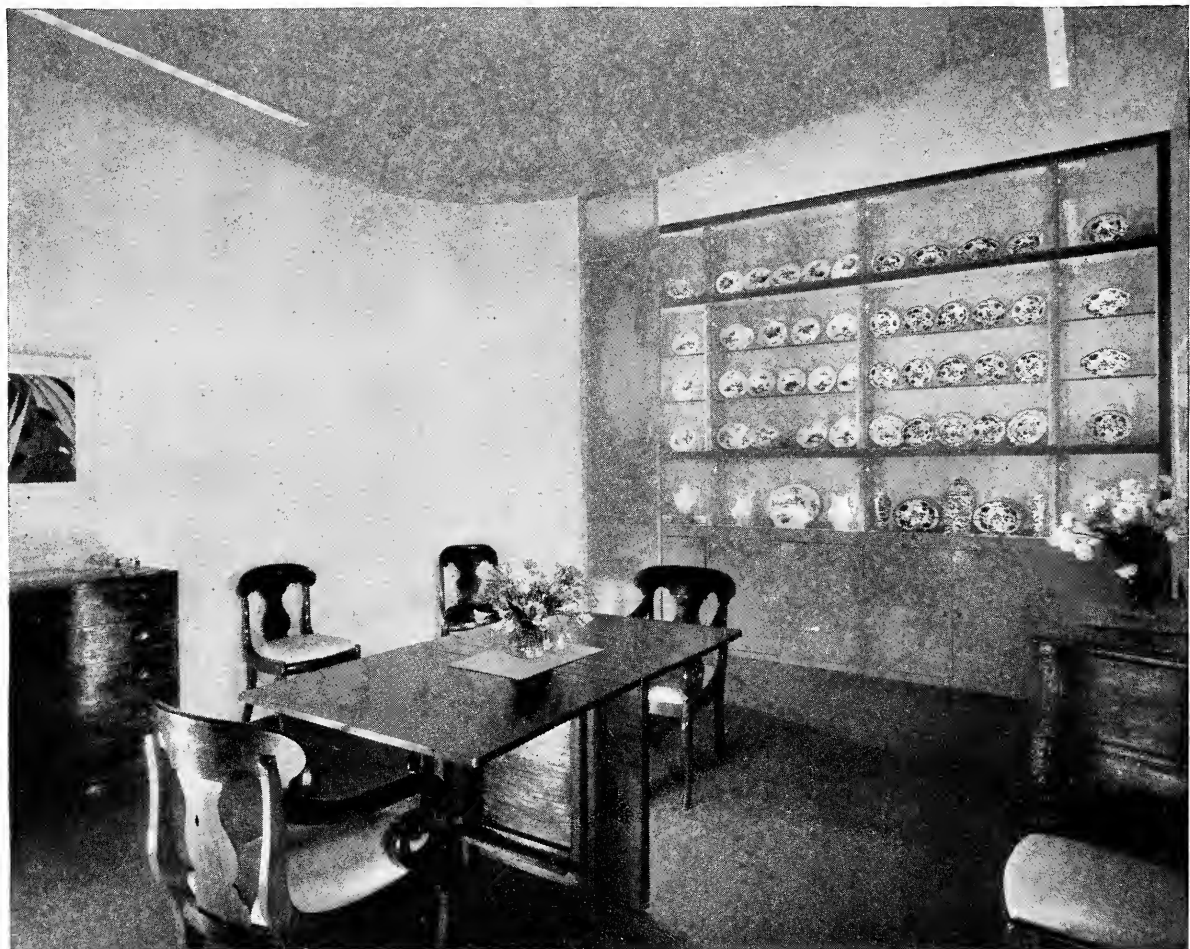
### BEDROOM, NESBIT HOUSE, CALIFORNIA

This much-publicized room deserves the attention it has gotten. There is nowhere one could possibly prefer to awake than in this room. Small paned windows would have been a mistake.

*Costain*

MOTOR ENTRANCE, CONGER GOODYEAR HOUSE. LONG ISLAND

The open grill side wall and the openings in the doors allow the visitor a glimpse of the interior. The approach is not forbidding, but friendly.



*Costain*

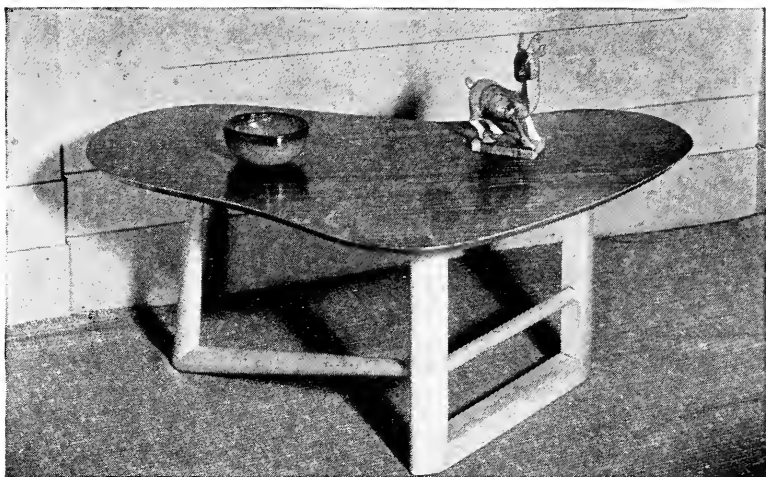
19

#### DINING ROOM, PHILIP GOODWIN APARTMENT, NEW YORK

The fine old china in this room is more easily appreciated in a wall arrangement so clean in design. The furniture of several periods, proves that good furniture, like people of good breeding, can live together.



20.



Tables designed for living.

21.



22.



*Knickerbocker*

PHILIP GOODWIN APARTMENT, NEW YORK

Light without interference, for bridge, food, or decorative effect.



Perhaps this is the moment to say a few words about that favorite trap of the current era, the dropped living room. Why, after all, should you drop or sink your living room? Why give yourself some dangerous little steps to be negotiated every time you carry a tray in or out? Of course, they serve as conversation openers, for every guest will have to be cautioned about them for the rest of time; but it is possible that, in the course of years, you will tire of this opening gambit. As a menace, the dropped living room is in the same class as those icy little rugs that used to be scattered across every hall and doorway. At best, they never lay in the same place twice, and had to be straightened every morning. At worst, your mother-in-law broke her hip by skidding on one, and spent six months in a cast in your best bedroom. If you must have *dropped* living rooms, *scatter* rugs, and *throw* cushions, go ahead, but take out insurance to cover.

It is possible that, instead of building from the ground up, you have decided to remodel an old house. In this case, reason and emotion make good partners. In almost every American town of any size, there are several handsome old houses now stranded like islands in the business districts. Reason tells us that these houses are excellently constructed, that they are sound, that it is a pity to tear them down. Reason also points to the practical value of their central location and their accessibility. Emotion veils them in sentiment, clings to the memories they inspire, feels in their loss a loss to our history. Then by all means let Discrimination go to work on them, and, with a few surprisingly simple changes, they can be made into cheerful homes, apartments, shops, or community centers.

Strip off the wooden fretwork which was originally added as an afterthought. The eagerness with which woodworkers stuck bits of

overornamentation on the basic good proportions of a building can be matched by your eagerness to remove it. Old, glaring electrical fixtures can be replaced by fresh and singing colors. Take the fancy work off the otherwise well-built staircase, put clear windows in place of the stained glass that once impressed the neighbors, build in some closets. Close up part of the wide openings between rooms and replace them with ordinary doors to give greater privacy. The result will be a sound house, full of light and air under the high ceilings, and with a spaciousness not found in modern construction.

In the enthusiastic acceptance of the new, it is not necessary to reject the old. No one needs to be so ravenously modern as to throw out everything owned by his father or grandfather. But the old should be judged by the same critical standards which we apply to the new. Are they well made? Do they serve their purpose? Can they be adapted to our modern life?

The same discrimination that helps in remodeling an old house should also apply to the treatment of the furnishings in it—and here is where Emotion should be put in her place and kept there.

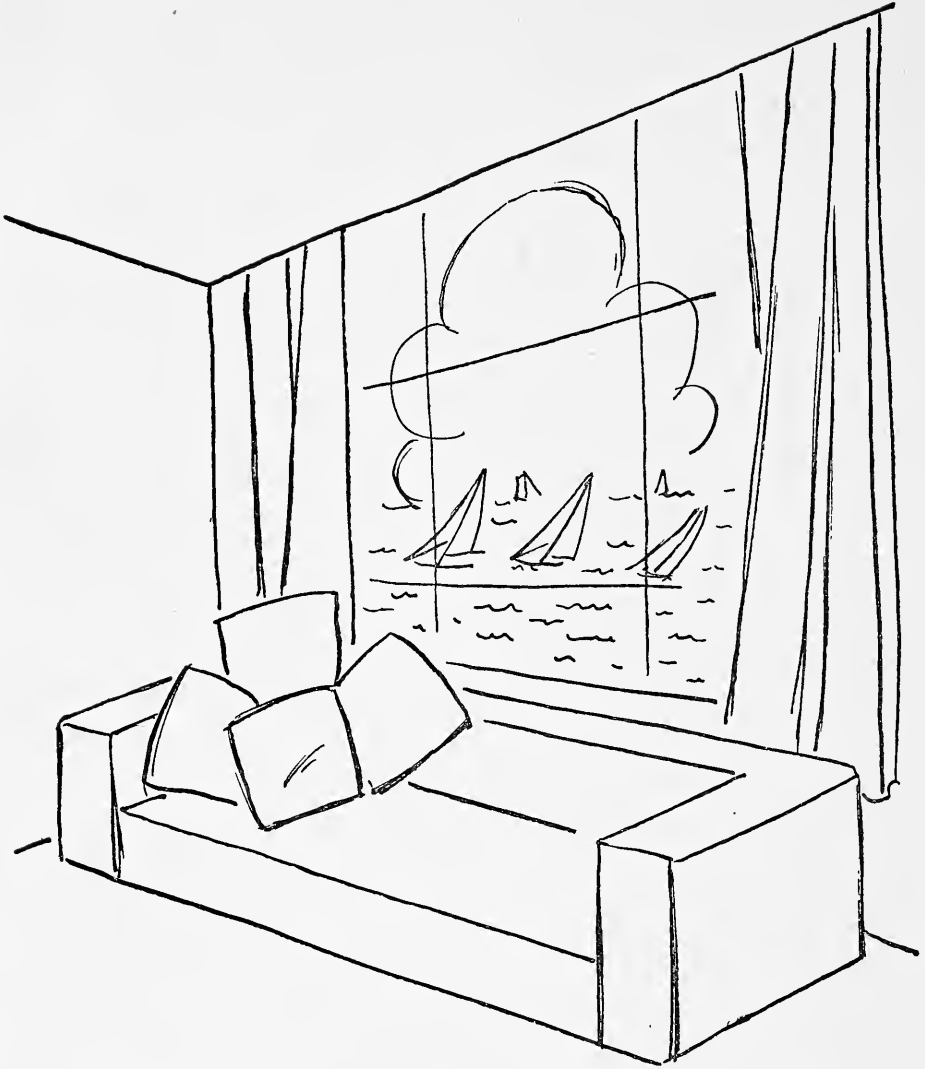
A home should be a record of a life, but only of the best in it. Senseless collections are one of the first things to discard. If you pick up seashells, keep only the prettiest. If you take a trip, spend your money on one fine object to remind you of it rather than on a dozen knickknacks. Such things as a hand-woven basket picked up in the mountains, an arrowhead found in a field, a pottery jug, a child's mahogany chair from an antique ship, can in themselves evoke the memory of an entire vacation. Gather your keepsakes carefully, love them, but do not be afraid to throw them away if your taste outgrows them.

Both Reason and Discrimination will help you achieve Suitability. Consider your own type. If you are an out-of-doors person happiest in the wide open spaces, keep your home bare and uncluttered. If you are a cozy character and can stand the dusting, have all the bric-a-brac and whimsies that amuse you. If you like a lot of flowers in your rooms, do not use violent colors which will clash with them. This also applies if you are going to do a great deal of entertaining. Your women guests, in dresses of many colors, will be grateful for a background that will show them off. Unless you are really a little lower than the angels, you will not wish to be like the Empress Josephine, who made a rival in a blue dress sit beside her on a green sofa throughout an evening party. She herself wore white and looked delicious.

Consider your locality. An ideal room for a seaside cottage might have a big window with a view of the water, framed in curtains of crisp white and lemon yellow, and a big white sofa with a collection of little cushions no more than eighteen inches square in the brilliant colors of a bouquet. This will be as cool, fresh, and simple as the sea and the sand.

In a New England home, the colors could be warmer—red or yellow walls with white woodwork, blue, green, and orange homespun for furniture coverings, white cushions, some good old mahogany, polished brass, copper, or pewter, and big jars or kettles full of flowers in front of the fireplace in summer.

If you live in the southwest and have come under the Spanish influence, you might remember that Spain is an austere country, where it is said that you can look farther and see less than anywhere else in the world. If you think of Spain in terms of vivid colors, remember that those colors are placed as accents against a barren landscape. Incidentally, instead of spending a fortune on watering



*. . . a big window with a view of the water . . .*

a little square of exiled Kentucky bluegrass, you might have a garden of the strange growths suited to the desert, and get your green from a top coating of ground green stone.

All this adds up to the same old thing: Be what you are.

It would be possible to go on for many pages with direct suggestions on the subject of decoration. But it is hoped that the reader who has come this far will have acquired a slant which will make it possible to work out problems independently.

A pupil in a class on decorating tentatively raised her hand at the end of the first day's lecture, and asked what she should do with a dark green dining room which was too gloomy, but which she could not afford to have repainted. The lecturer asked her to wait and present the question later in the course. Several days later she came up with it again. "Madam," said the lecturer, "if in a little while you cannot answer that for yourself, I shall have failed in my efforts." She waited a week, and then she said she *had* to know. "What do you think?" asked the lecturer. She mentally galloped through what she had heard. "If I used bright yellow curtains," she inquired timidly, "would that make it more cheerful?" "Would it?" asked the teacher. The idea of thinking for herself still frightened her considerably, but, faced with it, she took the plunge and came up beaming. "Yes," she said triumphantly. "It would."

That was the use of reason. When it comes to discrimination, let George Washington have the last word. There is to be seen in Mount Vernon a letter in which he asks a friend in Connecticut to go to a new textile mill in that neighborhood for him—"since he might be riding that way"—The friend was to order for him forty yards of their *best* weave. Not blue to pick up the color in a portrait, not a *toile de jouty* to put in a certain room, just forty yards, and of the best.

## THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

**T**HERE IS NOTHING new under the sun, for the mind of man cannot imagine anything the like of which he has never seen. There are no new truths in this book, only the old truths with a few cobwebs brushed away. The first decorator was a cave man who may have skinned a saber-toothed tiger and thrown the hide across a rock. Since then, we have done nothing except make new arrangements of basic materials.

The cave man had a purpose in his decorating. He intended to make the rock more comfortable for himself and his family to lie on. We should approach the arrangement for our homes in the same spirit today, and be sure that everything we do contributes to the happiness and comfort of those in the home.

During the World's Fair of 1939, a designer made a curtain for the General Motors exhibit. He worked out a simple print which used a coiled spring and a cantilever and felt that he had been very original—until he went some months later to a museum and saw an Egyptian pot of 8000 B.C., upon which exactly the same design was repeated. In the days of the Pharaohs, art was an application of man's ingenuity and skill to the process of living—and so it is today.

The museums all over the country have a great opportunity to lead people along these lines, but few of them so far have demonstrated the fact that there is beauty in *any* honest and functional work of man as well as in the fine arts. Those who have pioneered



in this direction and have treated art not as something dead and embalmed, but as something living and beside us every day, deserve every encouragement.

The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis has recently opened what it calls the Everyday Art Gallery as a permanent adjunct of the museum. Their first exhibit, "Ideas for Better Living," includes a model of a "solar" house, a newly designed electric iron, a portable heater of wood, stainless steel, and glass. They have pottery, crystal, woodwork, furniture, designed by living craftsmen.

In the words of the director, "There are more people who do not have an interest in painting and sculpture than there are who do. There is no person, however, who is not interested in the products of the other arts—those which form his daily scene . . . his tableware, his easy chair, his stove." If more museums could adopt the same attitude, they would be a tremendous force in revitalizing the taste and reconstructing the life of America today.

These new articles could not be true "works of art" if they slavishly imitated the old, for they are to be used under different conditions, to serve a different era. If you yearn for old things, you must be prepared to meet the repair bills, to wash, polish, and dust every crystal of your chandelier, to clean wall moldings over and over, to wash small windowpanes one by one, to dust the turned posts of your stair rails, to renew lamp shades.

The modern designer will try to give you no moldings to clean, large windows to wash with a mechanical wiper, light furniture which shows less dust than dark mahogany. Lamp shades will be made of smooth stuff that can be wiped clean, and lamps with adjustable necks will throw light where it is wanted. The textile designs will be quicker to print and therefore cheaper. The new chemical yarns will be strong and will absorb no dirt. The new

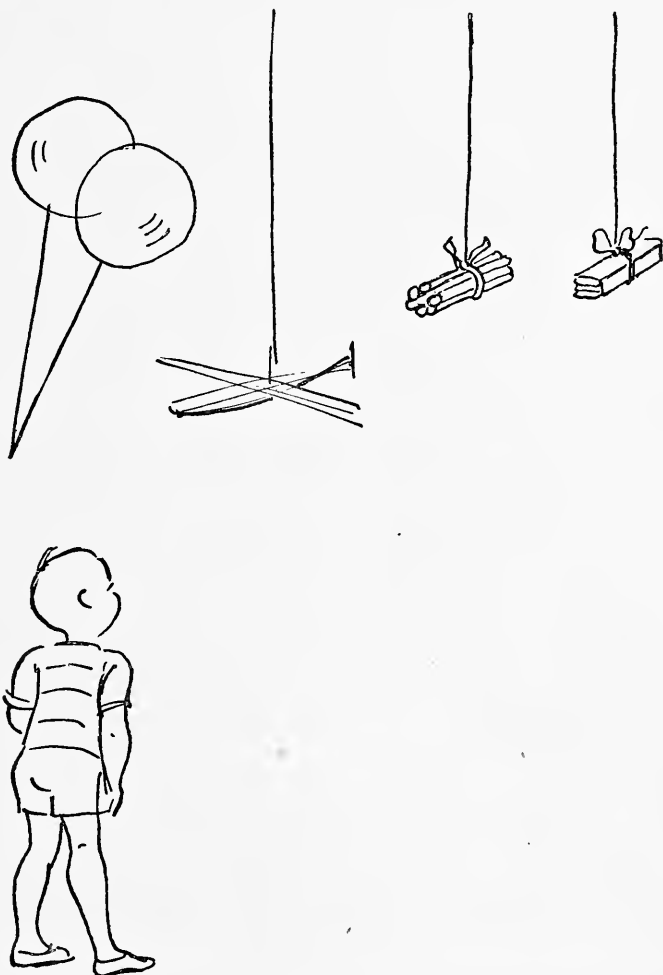
cushioning of foam rubber will be soft and more durable than hair or down upholstery, and will make our beds, sofas, and chairs lighter and more sanitary. Not all of these improvements have arrived, but they are on their way, and there should be some noncommercial method of bringing the best of them to the attention of the public.

The industrial designers are working on these inventions with a purpose. They are searching out new uses of old materials in order to make the life of today more convenient and agreeable. The atom is not new, the new thing is the formula for splitting it. Nylon and plexiglas are only new combinations of the same old elements. At one time in history, gold taken from the ground was molded and beaten into useful shapes, much as aluminum is today. There has always been sunlight, then various mediums were found which gave light, and now we have electricity. Science has made these advances possible, and now we should go forward with science applied to the equipment with which we live.

Beauty will not be sacrificed in these changes if we will remember that the touchstone of any product should be its integrity, its fitness for the use for which it was designed. It takes a while to raise the taste of an individual or a nation, but the eye can be trained by looking at beautiful things. They can be found in museums, in the better shops, and one object can be weighed against another. No rules can be given, but it is safe to say that if something has been considered beautiful for centuries, it is at least entitled to a decent respect. Keep exposing yourself to the best, and after a while the merely good will not tempt you. Nothing can be the best if it is pretending or if it does not in some way reflect a workman's honest enthusiasm.

When a little boy has an allowance of only a nickel a week, he

will hesitate a long time before he spends it. The charm of chewing-gum will have to be weighed against the lure of licorice, and a rubber balloon against a cardboard glider. But all of us are children in a toy store with only a nickel to spend, in the sense that we have only one life, only one chance to put down roots and build ourselves a shelter and a background. So we ought to be at least as careful with our homes as the perplexed little boy with his small capital.

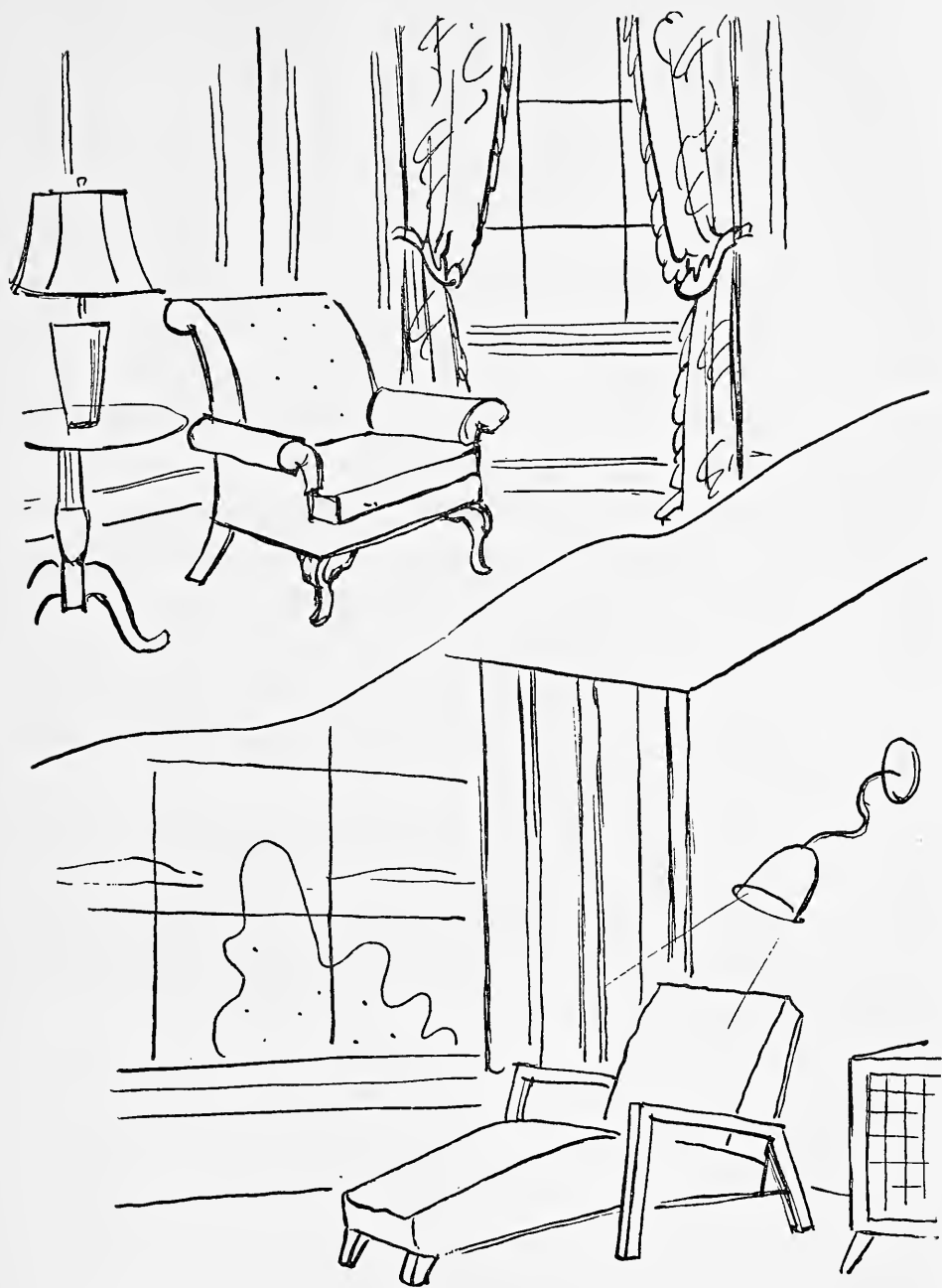


... a nickel to spend ...

If this book has said what it has meant to say, further advice on home furnishing would be superfluous here. It has something in common with the meaningful articles we have been praising, for it has been written with a purpose. Not with a desire to dogmatize, or to sell a set of recipes; not with a desire to puff one way of living or another—but simply and solely in the hope of being helpful in some small way to the public. My honest wish is only that the setting down of these beliefs may help to clear away the obstacles to individual taste which have been raised by too close an adherence to tradition or to fashion, and to show people how easy it should be to have their homes as they really want them.

If some readers prefer 18th Century formality to anything else, then they by all means should cling to it. If they like the modern way of living, then may they always remember that “modern” should mean simplified and restful. If a few, in reading, have been encouraged to think for themselves, to inquire a little more precisely into the *meaning* of what they are doing as they plan, then this book’s purpose has been fulfilled.

Nothing can be more important or more beloved than a home from which happiness and contentment are reflected into the life around it. The nation or the body which has sound cells is sound in its entirety. Such homes are beautiful, because beauty is that which when seen is loved.



*18th Century formality and modern way of living.*



*The following list comprises just a few of the many artist-craftsmen in this country.*

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230 Fenway, Boston, Mass.  
**POTTERY**

BLACKSTONE, Arthur  
BLACKSTONE, Jessie  
114 W. Foster St., Melrose, Mass.  
**WOOD CARVING**

COOPER, Dan  
21 E. 70th St., New York 21, N. Y.  
**FURNITURE & TEXTILES**

DAY, Rosamond Stricker  
San Rafael, Calif.  
**TEXTILES**

DEDHAM POTTERY  
Dedham, Mass.  
**POTTERY**

DUBUKE, H. C.  
Florence, Vt.  
**WOOD**

DUDLEY, WILLIAM P.  
24 Court St., Exeter, N. H.  
**METAL**

FISCHER, Alice  
Woodstock, N. Y.  
**CERAMICS**

FOLLY COVE DESIGNERS  
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R. F. D., Putney, Vt.  
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LIEBES, Dorothy  
545 Sutter St., San Francisco, Calif.  
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LUKENS, Glen  
University of Southern Calif.  
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*PEWTER*

PHELAN, Linn  
Linnwood Pottery  
Saco, Me.  
*POTTERY*

PRESTINI, James  
Chicago, Ill.  
*WOOD*

ROSSITER, Alfred  
Redding Ridge, Conn.  
*WOOD*

ROWANTREES POTTERY  
Paddock, Miss Laura S., Mgr.  
Blue Hill, Me.  
*POTTERY*

SAARINEN, Lilian Swann  
3055 Q. St., N. W., Washington, D. C.  
*CERAMICS*

SCHEIER, Mr. & Mrs. Edwin  
Durham, N. H.  
*POTTERY*

SHEETS, Donn  
Lee House, New Milford, Conn.  
*WOOD*

SMALL, Mrs. Charles  
Northeast Harbor, Me.  
*HOOKED RUGS*

SMALLRIDGE, Robert L.  
Northeast Harbor, Me.  
*SHIP MODELS*

SOULE, Lucia  
Worcester Folk Stitchery  
2 State St., Worcester, Mass.  
*LINEN*

STONE ASSOCIATES  
Gardner, Mass.  
*SILVER*

STRENGEL, Marianne  
Bloomfield Hills, Mich.  
*TEXTILES*

SULLIVAN, Mary Elizabeth  
1867 Hilyard St., Eugene, Oregon  
*TEXTILES*

SWEETSER, Mr. A. M.  
Waterbury, Vt.  
*WOVEN BASKETS*

TENAFLY WEAVERS  
Mrs. Sadie Sweet  
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WESCOTT, Charles  
Blue Hills, Me.  
*M E T A L*

WHITNEY, Lewis  
Rockport, Mass.  
*M E T A L - C O F F E E   S E T S*

WHITTIER, Mary  
New Hampshire League of Arts &  
Crafts  
258 North Main St., Concord, N. H.  
*T O Y S*

WINSTON, Mrs. Lydia K.  
West Dover, Vt.  
*P O T T E R Y*

WOODBURY, George  
Bedford, N. H.  
*W O O D*

WORCESTER FOLK STITCHERY  
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Since the limitations of space prevent a complete list, the author will be glad to furnish upon request, the names of additional artist-craftsmen.





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